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INDIA, US **NEED TO TOGETHER LOWER TARIFFS** STRESSES US AMBASSADOR

'I left a web series project where I played lead, just so I could be a part of

QUOTE OF THE DAY The pioneer In just one year, the Congress Government borrowed Rs 1.27 lakh crore, including loans with and without guarantees. At this rate, in five years, their debt will touch Rs 6.38 lakh crore. The Congress's mismanagement could push debt to Rs 7 lakh crore. Meanwhile, the actual debt contracted by the BRS admin stands at Rs 4.17 lakh crore - Harish Rao, BRS MLA

'Deeksha Viramana' from tomorrow

The 'Bhavani Deeksha Viramana' at Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada will take place from December 21 to 25, drawing a large number of devotees. NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshmisha chaired a coordination meeting for the event preparations on Wednesday. Following this, the temple's Executive Officer (EO) KS Rama Rao conducted a final review meeting on Thursday at the Mallikharjuna Maha Mandapam to ensure everything was in place. Officials from various...

Modi reaffirms India-UK ties

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday spoke to UK's King Charles and reaffirmed India's commitment to strengthening the comprehensive strategic partnership. During their discussion, they reflected on the historic relationship and emphasized their shared goal of fostering deeper collaboration in various areas. They reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the two nations which has been a cornerstone of.



Hiring activities in 2025 are likely to witness a 9 per cent growth in the country driven by sectors. including IT, retail. telecommunications and banking. financial services, and insurance (BESI) sectors, a report said on Thursday. According to the latest data from jobs and talent platform foundit (formerly Monster APAC & ME) there will be a 9 per cent hiring growth in the country in 2025, led by IT, retail, telecommunications, and BFSI sectors. With a 10 per cent growth in 2024 and 3 per cent...

-PAGE: 8

Ashwin deserved a fitting farewell

Unable to comprehend R Ashwin's sudden decision to retire from international cricket, a shocked World Cup-winning skipper Kapil Dev says the premier off-spinner deserved a fitting farewell, ideally on home soil. Ashwin stunned one and all by calling it guits on Wednesday, right after the Brisbane Test against Australia ended in a draw. Kapil felt Ashwin seemed unhappy with something. "I was shocked by how one of India's greatest cricketers chose to leave the game. The disappointment among the fans...

OS ON PARLIAMENT PREMISES

with her.



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Plumbing new depths of political animosity, rival MPs screamed and shoved in the forecourt of Parliament on Thursday in unprecedented scenes of unruliness, capping three days of acrimonious debate inside the House over preserving the

dignity of B R Ambedkar.

Two BJP MPs were hospitalised with injuries as Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi became the centre of the ruling party's accusations, including one by a woman MP who said he misbehaved with her.

NDA leaders filed a police com-

Two BJP MPs were | Congress president hospitalised with injuries as **Leader of Opposition Rahul** Gandhi became the centre of the ruling party's accusations, including one by a woman MP who said he misbehaved

plaint against him for "attempt to murder, physical assault and incitement".

The sordid incident perhaps without parallel started in the morning as BJP and opposition MPs marched towards each other over Union Home Minister Amit Shah's comments on Ambedkar. As the two

groups came closer, tempers and voices rose, soon resulting in a melee.

Mallikarjun Kharge said he

he lost his balance and sat

down. "Now they are the ones who are accusing us of

shoving them," the

82-year-old said.

was pushed so violently that

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said he was pushed so vio-lently that he lost his balance and sat down. "Now they are the ones who are accusing us of shoving them," the 82-year-old said.



However, the more apparent temple. His colleague Mukesh injuries were sustained by BJP's Rajput was also injured in the Balasore MP Pratap Sarangi, 69, head. who had to get stitches in the

2 BJP MPs injured; NDA, Congress file police complaints

Continued on Page 2

JAL JEEVAN MISSION WORKS

AP govt drops Rs 11,401-cr tenders

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Cabinet decided on Thursday to cancel tenders for 44,195 Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) works worth Rs 11,401 crore that were initiated during the previous YSRCP government.
Information and Public Relations

Minister K Parthasarathy announced the decision at a press conference held at the Secretariat in Amaravati. Explaining the rationale, he stated that several projects had either not started or were only 25 per cent complete.

"The tenders for these works will be cancelled, and fresh tenders will be invited. Additionally, 33,717 projects at various stages of completion have been approved, with definitive for their completion," the Minister said.

The Jal Jeevan Mission, a central water to all rural households ongoing projects in water-scarce completed.



projects in water-scarce regions to continue.

- Criticism of previous government for poor fund utilisation, with only Rs 4,000 crore of Rs 26,824 crore utilised.
- Review and redesign of poorly planned

JJM projects to ensure sustainable water sources.

 CRDA to utilise Rs 33,138 crore for Amaravati infrastructure, with loans from various banks.

through individual tap connections

Midday meal scheme reinstated for government junior colleges.



Kolusu Parthasarathy briefing the media about the decisions taken at the Cabinet meeting on Thursday.

regions like Pulivendula Dhone vide safe and adequate drinking by 2024. Parthasarathy added that Uddanam would continue and be



PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government is set to integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) on a large scale to improve administrative efficiency, said K. Dinesh Kumar, tion on AI initiatives. The session CEO of the Real-Time explored AI opportunities, use Governance Society (RTGS). cases, and their potential integraworkshop organised by Google in New Delhi on Thursday, Kumar outlined the

government's vision of using AI to transform governance.

The workshop followed the recent signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Google and RTGS for collaboration across various governi departments.

Continued on Page 2

AP unveils new sports policy



Minister for Sports, M Ramprasad Reddy addressing the media on Thursday.

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Transport, Youth, and Sports, Mandipalli Ramprasad Reddy, stated that under the leadership of Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu, sports have been given top priority in Andhra Pradesh. On Thursday, the Minister launched a new sports app and the state's sports policy in Vijayawada, emphasising the government's commitment to introducing modern

technology in the sports sector. The new sports app, he said, is designed to offer comprehensive information on sports associations, athletes, and events, showcasing the government's efforts to embrace innovations for the benefit of ath-

Highlighting the Chief Minister's focus on technological advancements, the Minister noted that the state is taking steps to improve services for athletes by leveraging modern tools and guiding them towards a stronger future.

The Minister also unveiled a pioneering sports policy, the first of its kind in the country, aimed at fostering talent and providing employment opportunities.

He added that the state plans to host the National Sports Competition in Amaravati in 2027 to encourage national-level recognition for athletes. Continued on Page 2



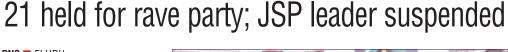
Leopard caught in farmer's trap, dies

PNS GANNAVARAM

A leopard died after getting caught in a trap set by a farmer to protect his crops in Metlapalli village of Gannavaram mandal in Krishna district on Thursday. The farmer, Durga Rao, had set

up the trap to deter boars from damaging his 4.5-acre farmland. Unfortunately, the leopard fell victim to the trap on Wednesday night.

The incident has sparked concerns among residents, who have reported sightings of leopard foot-prints in nearby fields. The forest department has been alerted to the situation and is taking measures to address the issue.



PNS ELURU

Police arrested 21 people for organising a rave party in Krovvidi village, Nidamarru mandal, Eluru district, where nude dancing took place.

Vakamudi Indrakumar, the Jana Sena Party (JSP) village committee president, hosted a lavish birthday celebration on the night of December 12. As part of the celebration, he arranged the rave party on the premises of a rice mill.

During the event, young women were brought in to perform nude dances on stage. Around 30 youths were also seen dancing with the women and engaging in inappropriate behaviour, including pouring liquor on the dancers. The disturbing scenes quickly went viral on social media, causing a stir within the JSP.



In response to the incident, JSP party. The JSP Nidamarru mandal the rave party and promoting the nude performances. Meanwhile, Nidamarru Sub-

Inspector (SI) Veera Prasad conleaders acted swiftly, with the firmed that a case had been regisparty leadership announcing the tered and 21 persons were arrestsuspension of Indrakumar from the ed for organising the rave party and nude dancing. The SI stated that president issued a statement con- organising such events is a crimidemning the organisation of such nal offence. Jana Sena party leadevents and suspending Indrakumar ers further revealed that there for his involvement in arranging were two factions within the party, with one group allegedly uploading the viral video of the nude dancing on social media.

HC upholds lesbian couple's right to live together

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh High Court has upheld the right of a lesbian couple to live together, affirming their freedom to choose partners.

A bench comprising Justices R Raghunandan Rao and K Maheswara Rao was hearing a habeas corpus petition filed by Kavitha (name changed), one of the Kavitha earlier, police traced Laitha women, alleging that her partner Lalitha (name changed) was detained by her father against her will and kept her at his residence in Narsipatnam.

The court on Tuesday further directed the parents of Lalitha not to interfere with the relationship of the couple, asserting that their daughter is a major and can make her own decisions.

The couple has been 'living together' for the past one year in

Vijayawada. Based on a missing complaint by



at her father's home, and rescued her. After that, she was kept at a welfare home for 15 days though she pleaded to the police that she was a major and wanted to live with her

Lalitha also complained to her father in September alleging that her parents are harassing her over the

relationship and other issues. After the police intervention, Lalitha came back to Vijayawada and started going to work, often

meeting her partner. Continued on Page 2

Severe coastal erosion threatens Vizag's shoreline November, followed by two

Museum

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

Coastal erosion has struck the Visakhapatnam shoreline, causing severe damage. The protective wall behind the Kurusura Museum has mostly collapsed, and the stretch from the museum to the Children's Park has been heavily affected. The erosion, which began four days ago, has damaged sand dunes, with no signs of relief.

Dr VVSS Sharma, Chief Scientist at the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO), Visakhapatnam, told The Pioneer, "While this stretch experiences some erosion every northeast monsoon season, this year's impact is unusually severe." He attributed the intensified erosion to recent weather events. "The Bay of Bengal saw two cyclones in October and

depressions in December, all of which worsened the situation,"

Dr. Sharma highlighted climate change as a major factor. "Rising sea temperatures are

increasing sea levels and wave heights, leading to more severe erosion," he explained.

He also compared the current situation to the erosion after Cyclone Hudhud in October 2014. "Two months after

Hudhud, we saw similar erosion south of the Kurusura Museum, which led to the collapse of the protective wall. This pattern seems to be repeating," he

With elevated wave activity

expected to continue, residents and authorities have been urged to stay cautious. Dr Sharma stressed the need for sustainable coastal management to protect Visakhapatnam's vulnerable



Dr VVSS Sharma, Chief Scientist at NIO, Visakhapatnam, stated that while erosion during the northeast monsoon is common, this year's impact is unusually severe due to two cyclones in October-November and two depressions in December.



Electrical safety becomes a cause for concern

Plectrical safety has become a growing concern in India, with alarming statistics highlighting the risks. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the country loses around 12,000 lives annually due to electrical accidents. In addition, countless animals perish, and significant commercial losses are reported. Property damage caused by short circuits and overloading occurs almost daily, often escalating into devastating fires in buildings, malls, and hospitals.

The situation is worsened by inadequate preparedness to handle such emergencies. Fires in high-density areas often spiral out of control before fire services can respond effectively. A glaring example was the COVID-19 pandemic when several urban hospitals suffered tragic fires caused by electrical overloading. This happened because electrical systems in these hospitals were not designed to handle the surge in demand.

Root causes of the problem

1.Overloading and poor infrastructure planning

Many residential, commercial and healthcare facilities fail to plan for future electricity demands. This leads to overloading, which remains a major cause of electrical fires and system failures.

2. Transmission lines in residential areas

Rapid urbanisation has led to distribution and transmission lines being routed dangerously close to residential areas, often violating safety codes.

FThe situation is worsened by inadequate preparedness to handle such emergencies. Fires in high-density areas often spiral out of control before fire services can respond effectively. A glaring example was the COVID-19 pandemic when several urban hospitals suffered tragic fires caused by electrical overloading.

Proper oversight is missing, and the risks grow as urban sprawl continues unchecked.

3. Regulatory and **Enforcement Gaps**

The Electricity Act places responsibility on the government, authorities, electricity inspectorates and the public to ensure safety. However, enforcement remains inadequate. Inspectors, who are often appointed from within

power utilities, tend to focus on data collection rather than actual safety oversight. This conflict of interest compromises the effectiveness of regulatory compliance.

Addressing challenges

During my tenure with the Regulatory Commission and RERA, I tried to address some of these issues by implementing specific standards. However, challenges persist,



D. RADHAKRISHNA Former Chairman of TERC

particularly in smaller cities where mandatory mock drills and safety protocols are often overlooked. Safety measures need to be enforced at every stage of the electricity lifecytransmission to distribution

For instance, quality control over meters, voltage levels, and load capacities is critical. However, old and inefficient electrical appliances, such as refrigerators, air conditioners, and ovens, are being reused in downstream markets. These gadgets not only consume excessive electricity but also pose serious safety risks, especially in households benefiting from free electricity schemes.

Proposed solutions

A holistic and coordinated approach is required to ensure electrical safety

1. Independent Safety Oversight

A dedicated department, like the Railway Safety

General of Civil Aviation, should oversee electricity safety. This department should collaborate with fire services and regulatory commissions to streamline safety protocols.

2. Regulatory Reforms

Regulations to ensure the quality of power and compensation for fatalities should be strengthened. Inspectors should be independent professionals, appointed from outside the power utilities, to ensure unbiased safety assessments.

3. Public Awareness

Campaigns Public education on the dangers of using outdated electrical appliances is crucial. Awareness programs should

highlight the risks associated

with poor-quality appliances,

overloading.

4. Safety in Urban Planning

Residential complexes, malls and hospitals must incorporate robust electrical safety measures during construction. Regular audits, capacity planning, and mock drills should be mandatory.

Conclusion

Electrical safety is not just a technical or regulatory issue — it is a public health and urban planning challenge. While some measures have been taken, there is an urgent need for stronger enforcement, institutional reforms and public education. With a unified effort, India can prevent avoidable tragedies and build a safer, more reliable electrical

CM unhappy with performance of some ministers in his Cabinet

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has expressed dissatisfaction with the performance of several Cabinet ministers. He voiced his displeasure over the fact that many in-charge min-isters have not yet visited certain districts, despite six months having passed.

According to reliable sources, during a discussion after the AP Cabinet meeting, the developments in Delhi related to the controversy surrounding the statement of Union Minister for Home Affairs, Amit Shah, were reviewed. Union Minister Rammohan Naidu briefed Minister Lokesh over the phone about the developments Parliament. Chandrababu Naidu also expressed concern over ministhat he is fully aware of how long files have been pending with each minister. He also criticised in-charge ministers for not visiting some districts as per their responsibilities. Ministers were advised to study policies in detail, with some admitting they had not reviewed them at all.

The Chief Minister mentioned

ters not effectively utilising technology, stating that he is closely monitoring their perfor-

The Chief Minister men-

tioned that he is fully aware of how long files have been pending with each minister. He also criticised in-charge minis-

ters for not visiting some dis-

tricts as per their responsibilities. Ministers were advised to study policies in detail, with some admitting they had not reviewed them at all. The cabinet rejected a proposal to reduce the tenure of local body chairmen from four years to two and a half years. Minister Narayana stated that the tenure of chairmen in 79 municipalities will be completed by March

next year. CM Chandrababu further stated that a total of Rs 31,000 crore is allocated for the construction of the capital. Minister for Civil Supplies Nadendla Manohar urged the Chief Minister to take appropriate measures for the construction of the assembly building. The CM has instructed ministers to inspect assembly buildings in various states to

Jagan asks YSRCP cadre to expose TDP-led coalition govt's failures

PNS VIJAYAWADA

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) president and former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has called upon his party workers to channel public discontent against the Chandrababu Naidu-led coalition government into a power-

ful movement.
Addressing local representatives from Anantapur district on Thursday, Jagan highlighted the growing dissatisfaction with the government's performance, stating that the people's concerns must be raised at the right time.

Jagan announced two key protests: on December 27, YSRCP will lead an agitation against rising electricity charges, urging citizens to burn inflated bills as a symbolic gesture. On January 3, attention will shift to the non-payNaidu's "Vision 2047" as empty rhetoric, contrasting it with YSRCP's tangible achievements, such as improved government schools, advanced courses, and the Family Doctor healthcare initiative. He also accused the government of fostering corruption in sectors like sand, liquor, and mining, calling it a "mafia-like system."

ment of Rs 3,900 crore in fee reimbursement and hostel grant dues, which have impacted students' education.

"These protests are about supporting the people, not political gains," Jagan said, accusing the TDP government of burdening citizens with an additional Rs 15,000 crore in electricity charges. He also criticised the TDP

for neglecting farmers by dismantling initiatives like free crop insurance and Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs), forcing them to sell produce without support for Minimum Support Prices (MSP). "We must stand with the farmers and highlight their struggles," Jagan urged.

Jagan dismissed Naidu's "Vision 2047" as empty rhetoric, contrasting it with YSRCP's tangible achievements, such as improved government schools, advanced courses, and the Family Doctor healthcare initiative. He also accused the government of fostering corruption in sectors like sand, liquor, and mining, calling it a "mafia-like system."

Reflecting on his own political journey, Jagan reminded his cadre of the challenges of leadership, citing his 16-month jail term as a trial that strengthened his resolve.

He assured his supporters that YSRCP remains committed to fulfilling its promises and standing by the people, despite challenges like the Covid-19 pandemic and declining state revenues.

Sajjala calls for active

participation in protest against power tariff hike

YSRCP State Coordinator

Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy

has urged party leaders, cadre,

and supporters to actively

participate in state-wide

protests on December 27

against the recent hike in elec-

Speaking to party leaders

and cadre through a telecon-

ference on Thursday, he

stressed the importance of

standing united for the welfare

of all sections of society and

putting pressure on the gov-

ernment to roll back the tar-

iff hike. He called for peaceful

rallies and representations at

all Assembly constituency cen-

AP govt...

Continued from Page 1

Criticising the inefficiency of

the previous YSRCP govern-

ment, he highlighted that while

some states secured funding of

up to Rs 1.5 lakh crore for the

scheme, the YS Jagan Mohan

Reddy-led administration man-

the coalition government.

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Chaos on...

Continued from Page 1

The Congress vehemently denied the charges. Party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said Rahul Gandhi and the others were protesting peacefully, but were prevented from entering Parliament by BJP

MPs carrying "sticks", it said.
The BJP MPs were seen carrying acards pinned to sticks MPs stopped, threatened and intimidated me," Rahul Gandhi said.

The Congress also filed a complaint against the BJP in the Parliament House police station. Both sides also complained to the respective Chairs in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha against each other. The scuffles and the controversy served to unite the opposition in defending Rahul Gandhi. National Conference leader Omar Abdullah said he knew Rahul Gandhi and he would not push anyone.

The trouble broke out minutes before both Houses were to convene at 11 am. A number of MPs of the ruling BJP-led National Democratic Alliance were protesting at the steps of Parliament's 'Makar Dwar', an entrance and exit reserved for lawmakers, against the Congress' alleged insult of Ambedkar, while MPs from the Congress and its allies

TODAY **ALMANAC** Krishna Paksha Dec 19 10:03 AM to Dec 20 10:49 AM to Dec 21 12:21 PM Nakshatram: Dec 20 01:59 AM to Dec 21 03:47 AM Purva Phalguni: Dec 21 03:47 AM to Dec 22 06:14 AM 10:51 AM to 12:13 PM Rahukalam: 2:58 PM to 4:20 PM Yamagandam: 12:36 PM to 02:21 PM 8:07 AM to 9:29 AM Gulika: 01:12 AM to 02:55 AM Amritakalam: Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:51 AM to 12:35 PM VIJAYAWADA WEATHER Forecast: Scattered Showers Temp: 29°° Humidity: 77% Sunrise: 6:31 AM Sunset: 5:40 PM **Updated:** December 19, 2024 5:00 PM

TDP misleading public on State debt: Gadikota

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Former MLA Gadikota Srikanth Reddy criticised the Telugu Desam Party Pradesh's (TDP) for allegedly misrepresenting the state's financial situation by inflating its debt figures to Rs 14 lakh crore.

Addressing the media on Thursday, Srikanth Reddy accused the TDP-led coalition of spreading baseless allegations to tarnish the achievements of the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) government.

Citing official data, he clarified that the state's total liabilities, including contingent liabilities and public

sector undertaking (PSU) debts, stood at Rs 7.22 lakh crore as of March 2024. He highlighted impressive Compound Annu: Growth Rate (CAGR) of 10.50% between 2019 and 2024, surpassing the national average of 9.34% and outperforming several states.

Srikanth Reddy also addressed the TDP's claims of economic mismanagement, pointing out significant employment growth under the YSRCP regime. He noted a surge in job creation through MSMEs and large industries, demonstrating the government's com-

mitment to inclusive development. He added that the TDP failed to acknowledge Andhra the economic challenges posed by the Covid-19 pangrowth nationwide.

Dismissing the TDP's allegations as a "pack of lies," Srikanth Reddy asserted that the YSRCP's governance had strengthened the state's economy and increased its contribution to the national

He urged the public to see through the TDP's "false propaganda" and reaffirmed the YSRCP's dedication to addressing the people's needs and driving progress.

HC upholds...

Continued from Page 1

However, Lalitha's father once again came to her place and took the daughter away forcibly in a vehicle. He kept her in his custody "unlawfully", Kavitha alleged in her

habeas corpus petition. The father also complained th police alleging that h daughter was abducted by Kavitha and her family mem-

Jada Sravan Kumar, counsel for Kavitha, pointing out earlier Supreme Court judgments, argued that the detenue has expressed her unequivocal consent to cohabit with the petitioner in a shared household of petitioner's parents and would never want to get back to her parents and other family

tee was formed to establish

benchmarks for resource

allocation in diverse geo-

in fostering cooperation and

CMRF saving many lives: Minister Subhash

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Labour, Factories, Boilers, and Medical Insurance Services, Vasanmsetti Subhash, highlighted the life-saving impact of the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF) and Letter of Credit (LOC) in aiding the poor across the state.

At an event held at the Secretariat on Thursday, the Minister handed over a cheque for Rs 10 lakh to Srinivasa Rao, the father of Yamini Durga from Allavaran in Kodurupadu Rural, East Godavari district. Yamini, a Thalassemia patient, received financial assistance under the CMRF. Speaking on

the occasion, the Minister praised Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's leadership, emphasising the government's commitment to the welfare of backward and weaker sections, particularly in healthcare and education. He noted that the CMRF has provided crucial support to indi-viduals facing life-threatening

health conditions.

The Minister also reiterated the government's focus on improving healthcare and education, prioritising these sectors in its agenda. Beneficiaries expressed their heartfelt gratitude to the Chief Minister and the Minister for their support.

the sports app as a historic step

Sports Secretary Vinay

aged only Rs 26,824 crore. Worse, only Rs 4,000 crore of the sanctioned amount was utilised, depriving millions of access to safe drinking water, the Minister alleged. The Cabinet also decided to review poorly planned JJM pro-

jects and redesign them to better meet the needs of the people and ensure sustainable water sources. In addition, the cabinet approved the Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) to utilise Rs 33,138 crore for infrastructure development in This includes the construc-

tion of quarters for IAS and gazetted officers, among other projects. Parthasarathy noted that CRDA is securing loans from the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Rs 11,000 crore from HUDCO, and Rs 5,000 crore from the German development bank KfW to complete Âmaravati's construction within three years

graphical regions. Police (GRP) Chiefs, organand CEO of the Railway women and children. In his closing remarks, Key discussions included DG RPF Manoi Yadava com-Board, delivered the keynote ised by the Railway mended the conference's role

5th all India GRP chiefs meet focuses on railway security

The 5th All India Conference

PNS VIJAYAWADA

of Government Railway Protection Force (RPF) and the Ministry of Railways, successfully concluded at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. The conference provided a platform for senior railway and security officials to deliberate on critical issues such as passenger safety, crime reduc-

Continued from Page 1

Kumar and his team

engaged with Google officials

during the event, discussing

global AI advancements and

their potential to revolutionise

government operations. He

noted that Chief Minister N.

Chandrababu Naidu aims to

leverage AI to make governance

more transparent, efficient, and

accessible to the people of Andhra Pradesh. The govern-

ment plans to streamline pub-

lic service delivery by using AI

AP govt focuses on AI for good...

tion, and manpower enhancement for bolstering railway security. Satish Kumar, Chairman

address, stressing the need for seamless collaboration between state police forces (GRP) and the RPF to ensure passenger safety. He highlighted the importance of addressing passenger grievances and improving crime registration processes. Kumar

to remove complex bureaucrat-

State's IT and RTG Minister,

Nara Lokesh, envisions creating

a unified search bar for citizens,

providing seamless access to all

government services in one

place. In addition, the state gov-

ernment is working on devel-

oping its version of ChatGPT

and exploring blockchain tech-

nology to simplify the delivery

of key certificates such as birth,

death, caste, income, residence,

and educational qualification

certificates, among others,

Farishte and Meri Saheli, aimed at safeguarding enhancing the efficiency of the Rail Madad portal for

also lauded RPF initiatives

like Operation Nanhe

handling passenger complaints, integrating e-FIR sysand addressing the infrastructure and manpower needs of the GRP. A commit-

through digital services. The IT

reaffirming the shared commitment to railway security. tems for quicker crime The event concluded with an reporting and investigation, emphasis on adopting advanced technologies, improving coordination, and prioritising passenger safety.

department is actively advancing these initiatives, with the government seeking Google's support to help achieve these goals, Kumar added.

Kumar emphasised that AI would bring transformative changes to governance, making it more efficient and citizenfriendly. Google officials expressed enthusiasm about collaborating with Andhra Pradesh and assured their technical support for the successful implementation of AI initiatives aligned with the state's goals and aspirations.

AP's sports policy unveiled...

Continued from Page 1

Referring to the previous government's neglect of sports, the Minister stated that athletes and associations had faced many challenges. However, the present government has launched both the sports app and policy within just six months, ensuring a better future for the next generation of ath-

The government is also focusing on integrating educa-

offer sports training at the elementary school level in rural areas. The Minister expressed confidence that with Nara Lokesh as the Minister for Education, the sports sector would receive significant support. He also mentioned that technology would be used to eliminate fake certificates in sports, bringing about neces-

ŚAAP Chairman Ravi Naidu described the introduction of

sarv reforms.

and highlighted the importance of digital certificates for athletes. He stated that the sports policy would transform tĥe state into a "Sports Andhra Pradesh" and would help identify deserving athletes while preventing the use of fake certificates. He credited Chief Minister Naidu as an inspiration for many athletes.

Chand lauded the government's support for sports through the new app, noting its benefits for both coaches and athletes

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'Bhavani Deeksha Viramana' from tomorrow

■ 'Arjitha Sevas' and 'Antharalaya Darshan' suspended

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The 'Bhavani Deeksha Viramana' at Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada will take place from December 21 to 25, drawing a large number of devotees. NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshmisha chaired a coordination meeting for the event preparations on Wednesday.

Following this, the temple's Executive Officer (EO) KS Rama Rao conducted a final review meeting on Thursday at the Mallikharjuna Maha Mandapam to ensure everything was in place. Officials from various departments attended the meeting, including Engineering, IT, Security, and Sanitation.

The discussions focused on infrastructure, technology deployment, security measures, and sanitation arrangements. The temple administration is working diligently to provide a smooth and spiritually fulfilling experience for all atten-

EO Rama Rao stated that approximately 6 lakh devotees are expected over the five days. He instructed officials to ensure that adequate amenities and efficient crowd management were in place. Drawing from past experiences, the temple authorities are making improved



Durga Temple EO Rama Rao addressing the final review meeting on the upcoming Bhavani Deeksha Relinquishment at the Mallikharjuna Maha Mandapam atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada on Thursday

arrangements for the devotees, he

Rama Rao further mentioned that the construction of queue lines from the Vinayaka temple to Om turning uphill had been completed. Additionally, sheds for the comfort of the devotees, illumination around the temple, sound systems, Irumudi Viramana points, Homa Gundam, Holding Points, Tonsuring Centres, and other necessary arrangements had also been finalised.

He assured that the temple aims

to offer a hassle-free darshan experience for all devotees during these five days. It was clarified that there would be no Arjitha Sevas or Antharalaya Darshanam during this period. The review meeting also covered the arrangements for Giri Pradakshina and other related ritnals

Meanwhile, EO Rama Rao announced that on December 21, the first day of the Bhavani Deeksha Relinquishment, devotees will be allowed darshan of Goddess Durga

Devi at 6.30 am. On the remaining four days, darshan will be available from 3 a.m. to 11 p.m. Additionally, he mentioned that besides the Prasadam counters at Kanaka Durga Nagar, two counters at PNBS and the Railway Station will operate on three shifts.

Durga Temple Deputy EO M Ratna Raju, Executive Engineers KVS Koteswara Rao, T. Vykunta Rao, Vaidic Committee Members, and other officials were also present at the meeting.

Tenure of official PICs extended for 6 months

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The State government has extended the tenure of official Persons-in-Charge (PICs) for the 1961 Primary Cooperative Agriculture Cooperative Societies (PACS) in the State for an additional six months from December 21. This marks the second time such an extension has been granted. In this connection, Agriculture and Cooperation Department Special Chief Secretary B Rajasekhar issued a G.O.Rt.No.790 on Thursday.

After the TDP-led NDA government came to power, the previously constituted Three Men Committees for PACS were dissolved in June this year. Subsequently, cooperative departmental officials were appointed as PICs in July. The State government has not yet conducted elections for the PACS managing committees. As a result, the current PICs will continue either until newly elected managing committees assume office, or until further government orders, which is earlier under Section 32(7)(a)(ii) of the Andhra Pradesh Cooperative Societies Act, 1964. This decision ensures the uninterrupted functioning of PACS, maintaining operational stability while awaiting elections or further directives.

According to the G.O., the Commissioner of the Cooperation and the Registrar of Cooperative Societies have sent a letter to the government to extend the PICs for 1961 PACSs in the State.



AP leaders meet Union Minister to address tribal issues

PNS VIZIANAGARAM

Vizianagaram MP Kalisetti Appalanaidu and Pathapatnam MLA Mamidi Govinda Rao have met Union Tribal Affairs Minister Jual Oram to discuss pressing issues affecting tribal communities in Andhra Pradesh. The leaders highlighted the persistence of the doli system, a traditional practice where people are carried in makeshift stretchers over long distances, often in dire medical emergencies. This practice persists due to the lack of proper roads and transportation infrastructure in remote tribal areas. "It is deeply troubling that in the 21st century, the doli system continues to exist in tribal areas," said MP Kalisetti Appalanaidu. "Tribals should not have to endure such hardships. We have strongly urged the Union Minister to address

this issue with urgency."
MLA Govinda Rao echoed these

sentiments, drawing attention to the lack of basic amenities in tribal regions. "The absence of proper road connectivity and healthcare facilities has left the tribal population in Srikakulam and Vizianagaram districts in a vulner-

able state," he remarked. The duo submitted a detailed memorandum to the Union Minister, outlining the problems faced by the tribal population in the State. The memorandum also included specific proposals, such as building all-weather roads, establishing primary health centres in remote villages, and launching awareness campaigns. Jual Oram assured the delegation of his commitment to addressing these issues. "The government is committed to improving the lives of tribal communities across the country. I will personally review the memorandum and take up the necessary steps to resolve these challenges," he said.

Vax schedule for livestock announced

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Dr T Damodhar Naidu, Director of the Animal Husbandry Department, has announced the vaccination schedule for the year 2024-25 to ensure the health of livestock across the state. The schedule aims to provide timely vaccinations and a well-organised plan for the entire state.

As per the department's plan, livestock vaccinations will be conducted quarterly, starting from December 2024. The vaccination programme will cover all districts and will be conducted in the following phases:

December 2024: Vaccination Campaign in SPSR Nellore, Annamayya, YSR Kadapa, Chittoor, and Anantapur districts. Focus: Diseases affecting cattle and goats.

January 2025: Vaccination Campaign in Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, West Godavari, Krishna,

Guntur, Prakasam, and Nandyal districts. Focus: Preventive care for young livestock and specific viral outbreaks.

February 2025: Vaccination Campaign in ASR, Anakapalli, Eluru, Dr BR Ambedkar Konaseema, NTR, Vijayawada, and the remaining districts, including SPSR Nellore, YSR Kadapa, Anantapur, Chittoor, and Prakasam. Focus: Diseases affecting large populations and high-risk areas.

March 2025: Final Phase to complete all remaining livestock vaccinations for diseases requiring six-month coverage.

The department urges farmers to ensure that their livestock receive vaccinations on time and actively participate in the programme to safeguard animal health. All campaigns will be carried out under the supervision of the Animal Husbandry Department to ensure maximum coverage and efficiency.

Call for error-free revision of voter list

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

The Commissioner and Director of Mines and Geology and Role Observer for Special Summary Revision (SSR)-2025, Praveen Kumar, has stressed the importance of vigilance and accuracy during the voter list revision process for 2025. Kumar highlighted the need for thoroughness and precision, warning that mistakes in the voter list can undermine the electoral process.

"We must ensure that the revision process is thorough and accurate. Officials should take all necessary precautions, especially considering incidents from the past," Kumar said during a review meeting. He also emphasised the need for timely and effective solutions to public



requests, particularly in addressing significant differences between the population and voter lists. Kumar underscored the importance of proper communication between higher-level and lower-level officials to maintain coordination.

"Coordination is key to ensuring that the revision process is carried out smoothly," he added. District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad reported that as of October 29, the draft list included 20,14,236 voters in the district, with a gen-

der ratio of 1027 and a General Population (GP) ratio of 752. The Collector assured that all actions are in line with Election Commission guidelines, and regular training sessions are being conducted to ensure smooth progress.

Visakhapatnam North MLA Vishnu

Visakhapatnam North MLA Vishnu Kumar Raju raised concerns over past discrepancies in the voter list. "In previous revisions, we found serious issues, including differences between the population and voter ratios. We ourselves identified and reported bogus votes to the authorities," Raju said, urging further scrutiny of the lists. The meeting was attended by Joint Collector K. Mayur Ashok, DRO BH. Bhavani Shankar, EROS, AEROS, and representatives of various political parties.



'Vibhaava-2024' at Siddhartha College today

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Department of Computer Science at PB Siddhartha College will host a state-level conference for postgraduate Computer Science students, Vibhaava-2024, on December 20, announced Principal Dr Meka Ramesh on Wednesday. A poster for the event was unveiled in the presence of the Head of the Department and faculty members.

Dr Meka Ramesh stated that PG students in Computer Science, including those pursuing MCA, MSc Computer Science, MTech Computer Science, and other similar courses across the state, are invited to participate. The event will feature technical competitions such as Technical Quiz, Paper Presentation, Coding & Decoding, and Project Expo. Additionally, cultural events like Mr & Ms Vibhaava, E-Waste Management,

Videography, and Group Dance will be organised.
The poster release was attended by Principal Dr
Meka Ramesh, Director Vemuri Babu Rao, Dean
Rajesh C Jumpala, Head of the Computer Science
Department Dr TS Ravi Kiran, Vibhaava-2024
Convener B Roja Priscilla, faculty members, and
PG Computer Science students.

Collector reviews arrangements for naval exercises

Chief Minister to attend Navy Day celebrations

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad has instructed officials to ensure thorough arrangements for the naval exercises scheduled to take place on January 4, coinciding with Navy Day celebrations. In a review meeting held at the Collectorate meeting hall, Prasad emphasised the importance of coordination between various departments to ensure the smooth execution of the event.

"The Chief Minister will be attending these celebrations, and it is essential that all departments work together to make the arrangements seamless and efficient," said the Collector. He further highlighted the need for comprehensive security measures and the setup of a green room near the main venue to facilitate VIP attendees. Prasad also

accessible to the general public, instructing officials to set up barricades to manage crowds, provide mobile toilets and drinking water facilities, and install LED screens at various locations.

Navy officials provided insights into the naval exercises, including an operational demonstration (OP demo) that will be held at the beach area. The demonstration will be accompanied by a laser show, drone display, and aerial exercises, showcasing the Navy's capabilities. "We are preparing for full rehearsals on January 2, and all necessary arrangements are underway, including the establishment of a training centre for the demonstrations," said a senior Navy official. The meeting was attended by GVMC Commissioner P. Sampath Kumar, VMRDA Commissioner K.S. Vishwanathan, and Navy Commanders Y.K. Kishore and Manoj Kumar.



SRM University-AP holds 2-day intl meet on gender exploitation

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The two-day international conference on "Breaking the Silence: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Gender Exploitation and Resistance," organised by SRM University-AP, concluded successfully, offering enriching discussions and diverse perspectives on critical gender issues. The conference attracted a wide range of participants, including academicians, experts, research scholars, and students from both India and abroad.

In his address, Prof. Vishnupad, Dean of the Easwari School of Liberal Arts, highlighted the ongoing relevance of gender studies, stating, "Despite over 60 years of feminist movements and scholarship, gender asymmetry and violence remain deeply ingrained. Patriarchal forms of violence still persist." He also challenged the widespread assumption that education alone leads to progress, pointing to India's obsession with engineering and medical degrees, which, according to him, fosters a culture of violence, as seen in the high number of student suicides in places like Kota.

Dr. Sayantan Thakur, Assistant Professor and Head of the



Department of Literature and Languages, remarked, "Conferences like these are both inspiring and daunting. While they bring together brilliant minds to address critical issues, they also expose the continuing challenges of gender exploitation."

Prof. Anita Singh, in her keynote address, shed light on the troubling pattern of societal indifference towards women denied justice, citing several compelling examples of such cases.

The event featured insightful talks by renowned scholars, including Prof. Anita Singh from Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi; Prof. Rajinder Dudrah from

Birmingham City University; Prof. Geetanjali Gangoli from Durham University; Prof. Nalini Iyer from Seattle University; and Prof. Priyanka Tripathi from the Indian Institute of Technology, Patna. These scholars led discussions on key themes such as gender resistance, intersectionality, trauma, and survival.

Over 70 research papers were presented, and more than 140 participants engaged in thought-provoking discussions on gender exploitation and resistance. The sessions provided a platform for multifaceted perspectives on how gender inequality and exploitation persist across various societal structures.

Awareness session held on Nari Shakti Scheme

■ Scheme provides not just credit facilities, but also access to skill development, mentorship, and advisory services

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

The AP Chambers Women's Wing organised an informative session on the Union Nari Shakti Scheme on Thursday, aimed at raising awareness about the initiative, which supports women entrepreneurs in starting or growing their businesses. Speaking at the meeting, Narasimha Kumar, Regional Head, Union Bank of India (UBI), outlined the key features of the Nari Shakti scheme. He emphasised the importance of popularising this initiative to empower women entrepreneurs across the region.

"The Union Nari Shakti Scheme is an essential step towards empowering

women in business. It is designed to provide not just credit facilities, but also access to skill development, mentorship, and advisory services," said Narasimha Kumar. "Our Nari Shakti Branches will serve as hubs, offering a range of services to women entrepreneurs."

Mukunda Priya, Manager of Nari Shakti Branch, stated that the scheme offers a variety of loan options, including working capital and term loans, to support businesses owned by women. "The loan amount starts at a minimum of Rs 2 lakh, with no upper limit. For Self-Help Groups (SHGs), the loan limit is Rs 20 lakh. Moreover, no collat-

eral is required if the loan is covered

under the CGTMSE scheme," Priya said. The Nari Shakti scheme aims to provide holistic support to women entrepreneurs through its dedicated Nari Shakti branches.

Dr. Y. Geeta Srikanth, chairperson of the Women's Wing, stressed the importance of empowering women entrepreneurs. "Schemes like Nari Shakti are crucial in providing women with the necessary support and resources to succeed in business," she said. The meeting was attended by several women entrepreneurs, who shared their experiences and insights into the opportunities provided by the scheme. A. Leela Rani, vice-chairperson of Visakhapatnam, also participated in the meeting.





Low pressure to move towards south AP coast

The well-marked low pressure area over the Bay of Bengal is expected to move towards the South Andhra Pradesh coast over the next 12 hours and then towards the Andhra Pradesh coast in the subsequent 24 hours.

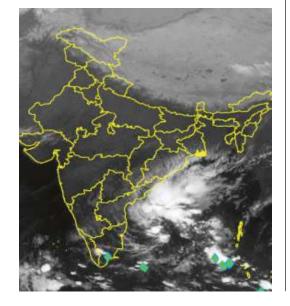
The Meteorological Office on Thursday reported that the well-marked low pressure area over the southwest Bay of Bengal was located over the southwest and adjoining west-central Bay of Bengal at 08:30 hrs today.

The associated upper air cyclonic circulation extends up to 5.8 km above mean sea level. The system is likely to move nearly northwestwards towards the South Andhra Pradesh coast during the next 12 hours and then move nearly northwards along the Andhra Pradesh coast in the following 24 hours.

Heavy rain is likely at isolated places in north coastal Andhra Pradesh over the next 48 hours. A similar situation is expected in south coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next 24 hours, the Meteorological Centre said. Thunderstorms with lightning are likely at isolated places in north coastal Andhra Pradesh over the next 48 hours, and in south coastal Andhra Pradesh over the next 24 hours. Squally winds of 40-50 kmph, gusting up to 60 kmph, are expected in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next 48 hours. Light to moderate rain or thundershowers are expected in many parts of North Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema over the next seven days.

Rainfall was reported at several places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and at one or two places in Rayalaseema during the last 24 hours, the report added.

Heavy rain is likely at isolated places in north coastal Andhra Pradesh over the next 48 hours. A similar situation is expected in south coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next 24 hours, the Meteorological Centre said.



TTD INVITES PROPOSALS FOR TIRUMALA **VISION 2047**

PNS TIRUMALA

In alignment with the Swarna Andhra Vision 2047, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has announced the initiation of Tirumala Vision 2047, a strategic initiative focused on planned development, environmental management, and heritage conservation in Tirumala. To advance this objective, TTD has floated a Request for Proposal (RFP) inviting reputed agencies to contribute to this transforma-

The TTD Board, in its recent meeting, approved the initiative to focus on planned development, environmental manage-

ment, and heritage conservation. The Chief Minister has stressed the need to balance traditional aesthetics with modern functionality in Tirumala's development. He has called for pilgrim facilities and accommodations that respect Tirumala's spiritual sanctity and cultural heritage while ensuring simplicity, elegance, and sustainability.

The Vision Document 2047 will outline strategies for sustainable growth that respect Tirumala's religious sanctity while incorporating modern



Officials directed to enroll all Rabi crops under PMFBY scheme

PNS GUNTUR

District Collector S Nagalakshmi has instructed the concerned officials to ensure that the names of all eligible farmers' crops are included in the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) scheme for the Rabi season.

The Collector held a video conference with the officials, accompanied by Joint Collector A. Bhargav Teja, on Thursday. During the meeting, Collector Nagalakshmi announced that the government had extended the opportunity for

scheme until December 31, 2024, by paying a nominal premium of 0.3 per cent for crops grown in the Rabi season.

She further stated that farmers in the district can avail of crop insurance under the PMFBY scheme by paying a nominal premium: Rs 48 per acre for jowar, Rs 114 per acre for maize, Rs 45 per acre for green gram, Rs 50 per acre for black gram, and Rs 70 per acre for Bengal gram.

The Collector instructed agriculture officials to conduct meetings with farmers and tenant farmers to

farmers to enrol in the PMFBY raise awareness and encourage them to enrol their crops in the scheme by paying the affordable premium. She emphasised that teps should be taken to ensure 100% enrolment of farmers cultivating Rabi crops in the PMFBY scheme within the given time

> District Revenue Officer (DRO) Khajavali, District Agriculture Officer Nunna Venkateswarulu, Horticulture Officer Ravindra Babu, and Lead Bank Manager Mahipal Reddy were present during the video conference.

Collector for empowerment of fish farmers through govt initiatives ■ HIGHLIGHTS CRITICAL ROLE OF FISH FARMING IN PARVATIPURAM DISTRICT'S ECONOMY

PNS PARVATIPURAM

District Collector A Shyam Prasad has reaffirmed the district administration's commitment to fostering the economic growth of fish farmers through various initiatives. Speaking at a training programme for the Fish Farmer Producer Organisation (FFPO) under Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) held on Thursday, the Collector highlighted the critical role of fish farming in the district's economy.



erates only Rs. 194 crore annually, and it is vital that we boost this figure," said Shyam Prasad.

directly or indirectly dependent on fish farming, and it is our responsibility to provide them "Approximately 96,000 people are with the tools and knowledge

The Collector emphasised the need to enhance the number and strength of fish producer associations. "We currently have five fish producer associations, each with 100 members. We must expand these associations to help more farmers join the collective effort and increase fish production," he added. Shyam Prasad also directed the Fisheries Department to expedite the distribution of fingerlings to farmers, ensuring it is done by November each year. He

to improve their livelihoods.'

most of government schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, which is expected to be completed by March 31,

The Central Government will release Rs. 2.5 lakh in the first installment, with an additional Rs. 2.5 lakh available in the second installment if the funds are used effectively.

"This means fish farmers can access up to Rs 5 lakh for their development if they properly utilise the funds," he noted. The Collector also proposed a scheme

where if members contribute Rs. 2,000 as equity, they will receive Rs. 4,000 from the government within 15 days. "This initiative will help fishermen access more resources for their operations," he explained.

Shyam Prasad urged all fish farmers to take full advantage of the various government schemes to enhance their economic development. "Our goal is to set a target for high fish production and ensure that every fisherman is well-equipped to thrive," he con-

Muthavalli **Association** felicitates Waqf **Board Chairman**

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Pradesh Andhra Muthavalli's Association, under the leadership of Haji KM Shakeel Shafee, felicitated the newly elected AP State Waqf Board Chairman Abdul Azeez at the Waqf Board Office here on Thursday. Several Muthavalli and Durgah Committee representatives met Azeez and shared their concerns regarding Waqfrelated matters. The event reflected the collaborative efforts between the Waqf Board and the Muthavalli Association to address key issues and enhance the administration of Waqf properties in Andhra Pradesh.

Speaking on the occasion, Abdul Azeez pledged to focus on the development of Masjids and Dargahs across Andhra Pradesh. He assured the renewal of Muthavallis' tenure, provided they meet eligibility criteria. Later, Azeez encouraged forming and assured his commitment to resolving them promptly.

Further, he said the government is actively pursuing the establishment of a Waqf Board Regional Office in Kurnool. For that, the government has conducted legal consultations. Also, Azeez promised to ensure the proper functioning of the Waqf Tribunal to address disputes effectively. Meanwhile, he reiterated his commitment to safeguarding Waqf properties in the

Set up specialised skill development centres in Vijayawada: MP Chinni

PNS VIJAYAWADA/DELHI

Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath met Jayant Chaudhary, Minister for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship & Education, in nursday and sub mitted a representation. He sought to establish Specialised Skill Development Centres in Vijayawada to enhance the skills of over a lakh workers in the unorganised sectors of the automobile industry. The MP stressed that these centres will help workers keep up with the evolving technologies in the automobile sector.

MP Sivanath met the Minister at his office in Parliament, where they discussed the need to set up these skill development centres in Vijayawada. The centres will specif-

ically cater to workers in the unorganised automobile sectors, training them in the latest automotive tech-Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana) are insufficient for the region's needs.

The MP said that Vijayawada is home to over one lakh unskilled workers engaged in the automobile industry in Auto Nagar (Vijayawada). Despite their critical contributions, many of these workers lack formal training in advanced automotive technologies, which is essential to meet industry demands. He argued that the establishment of dedicated skill development centres will not only benefit these workers but also open up new employment opportunities for the youth in the region.

Notable automobile companies such as Kia Motors and Ashok Leyland are expanding their opernologies. The MP mentioned that ations in the Vijayawada region. the existing skill development initia- To meet the growing demand, tives under the PMKVY (Pradhan workers need to be trained in mechanical and tems, BS6 vehicle diagnostics, fuel injection systems, paint and coating technologies and the latest diagnostic tools for both conventional and electric vehicles. The MP pointed out that specialised training centres in these areas are crucial for workers to upgrade their skills and stay rel-

vant in the evolving market. The MP said that Minister Jayant Chaudhary immediately directed the relevant officials to submit a report on the proposal within four

Broadband connection at affordable prices: FiberNet chief

Andhra Pradesh FiberNet Chairman GV Reddy has assured that internet connections will be provided at

Speaking at the APSFL cable operations meeting here on Thursday, Reddy stated that the government is working towards making fiber networks, cable connections, and landline phone services accessible to the poor and middle class at very low prices. He emphasised that providing affordable internet access would greatly benefit students in rural areas.

"AP FiberNet plans to provide over 50 lakh internet connections across the state in the coming days. Our service quality surpass-



es that of Jio and Airtel. We are also taking steps to address issues related to set-top boxes and network connectivity," he revealed.

Reddy also mentioned that

efforts are being made to offer entertainment channels at a lower cost. Later, he visited the district headquarters and interacted with

Cordon and search operation conducted, 32 bikes seized

PNS ■ ONGOLE

The police conducted a cordon and search operation at Bali Reddy Nagar Colony, located on the outskirts of Singarayakonda, during the early hours of

Thursday.
DSP R Srinivasa Rao informed the media that, following directions from SP AR Damodhar, a police team led by CI Hajarataiah carried out the operation in the colony. Drone cameras and sniffer dogs were deployed during the search, and several houses were inspected.

The police seized 32 motorcycles and an autorickshaw for lack of valid documents. The operation was undertaken as part of efforts to maintain law and order in the area.

The DSP urged the public to report any suspicious movements or activities of strangers by calling the police helpline numbers 112 or 100.



MISSING BOY FOUND DEAD IN CESSPOOL

PNS ANANTAPUR

A heartbreaking incident unfolded in Penukonda town of Sri Satya Sai district, as the body of a seven-year-old boy, missing since December 14, was discovered in a cesspool on Thursday.

According to DSP Venkateswara Rao, the boy, Alman, had arrived with his family from Chitradurga, Karnataka, to attend the Babayya Swamy Urusu on December 13. When he went missing, his parents reported the incident to the police on the night of December 14.

A thorough search operation



locate the missing child. Unfortunately, their efforts led to the grim discovery of Alman's body in a nearby cesspool. The body was retrieved and sent to the Government General was launched by the police to Hospital for a post-mortem

examination.

The incident has cast a pall of sorrow over the community, and investigations are underway to determine the exact circumstances surrounding the tragic

450 kg of ganja seized, 2 held

PNS ANAKAPALLI

The police have seized a large quantity of 450 kgs of cannabis being transported on a lorry at

Golugonda village. DSP Mohan Rao informed the media on Thursday that acting on a tip-off regarding the illegal transportation of ganja along the Anataram-Sileru-Darakonda ghat road, a police team conducted vehicle checks.

During the operation, the police discovered the cannabis concealed in a specially built chamber atop the lorry, covered with tarpaulin. The ganja was being transported to Madhya Pradesh. The seized cannabis is valued at over Rs 22 lakh. The driver and the cleaner of the lorry have been

TG's debt will touch ₹6.38 lakh crore in 5 years, warns Harish

PNS HYDERABAD

BRS MLA Harish Rao strongly countered the Congress's allegations about Telangana's debt in the Assembly and accused the ruling party of misleading the

public using exaggerated figures. Harish also exposed Congress's borrowing trends during their one year in power. "In just one year, the Congress government borrowed Rs 1.27 lakh crore, including loans with and without guarantees. At this rate, in five years, their debt will touch Rs 6.38 lakh crore," he said, cautioning that the Congress's mismanagement could push debt only to Rs 7 lakh crore.

He also provided a detailed 2023 and March 2024.

breakdown of the state's finances. asserting that the Congress's claims of a Rs 7 lakh crore debt were baseless and misleading. Harish criticized Finance Minister Bhatti Vikramarka's claims, pointing out the contradictions in the Congress's statements. "A lie repeated a 100 times doesn't become the truth. The Congress's propaganda about Rs 7 lakh crore debt is completely false," he said. He added that Congress's white paper itself acknowledged that Telangana inherited Rs 72,658 crore from erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, and an additional Rs 15,118 crore debt was incurred under the Congress between December

Collector promises to restore Kondapalli Fort's past glory

NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshmisha has announced a collaborative initiative to restore the historic Kondapalli Fort, aiming to preserve its cultural and historical significance for future generations. The district administration is working alongside the Tourism, Culture, Museum, Archaeology, and Culture Departments to breathe new life into the ancient landmark.

During his visit to Kondapalli Fort on Thursday, Dr Lakshmisha, accompanied by

Principal Secretary of Archaeology, Museum, and Culture Department G Vani Mohan, personally inspected the site and captured photographs on his mobile phone. He also took a keen interest in reading about the fort's rich history.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Lakshmisha emphasised efforts to revitalise and preserve the fort, making it a prominent heritage destination and a source of regional pride. He recalled the interest of former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu in developing Kondapalli Fort and highlighted the



district administration's plans for structural repairs to keep its history alive. Further, the Collector projected the

restoration project seeks to showcase the historical grandeur of Kondapalli Fort. Also, establish it as a key heritage and tourism destination. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and goernment funds should be used effectively to ensure sustainable development, he added.

Principal Secretary G Vani Mohan mentioned that the TDP government in 2019 had released funds for the fort's development. She suggested utilising CSR funds to further these efforts. She added that the government plans to organise cultural and

tourism programmes at the site without imposing additional expenses on the restoration project. This initiative promises to honour the fort's legacy while making it an attractive destination for tourists and history enthusiasts alike, she added.

Officials such as Tourism Regional Joint Director YV Prasanna Lakshmi, NTR District Tourism Officer A Shilpa, Archaeology Deputy Directors O Rama Subba Reddy and P Suresh, and several others from the Archaeology and Tourism Departments were part of the team.



ACROSS THE STATES



10 'seed villages' to be set up in Jharkhand

harkhand Agriculture Minister Shilpi Neha Tirkey on Thursday said her department would establish 10 'seed villages' in a bid to address its shortage and improve quality. The 'seed villages' would come up in West Singhbhum, Chatra and Latehar. "There has been a shortage of good seeds in the state. Along with this, seeds are not available in the state as per demand. Keeping this in mind, the department has decided to develop 10 villages as 'seed villages'," she told reporters here. Tirkey said the government would purchase the seeds from farmers. "The seeds will then be distributed at a fixed subsidised rate," she said. The minister also reviewed the progress of projects during a meeting with officials of agriculture, animal husbandry and cooperative departments. She also said her department is strengthening the Farmer Producer Organisations, and an amount of Rs 15 lakh was provided to the FPO in Lohardaga district.



Delhi's air quality worsens, AQI hits 451

elhi's air quality plunged into the 'severe plus' category on Thursday, with a 24 hour average Air Quality Index (AQI) of 451 recorded at 4 pm, according to the Central Pollution Control Board data. The city witnessed dangerously high levels of PM2.5, the primary pollutant, with 32 of the 35 monitoring stations recording air quality in the severe plus category. Some areas recorded AQI readings as high as 470. The PM2.5 particles, measuring 2.5 micrometers or less in diameter pose significant health risks as they can penetrate deep into the lungs when inhaled. The national capital remains under Stage IV of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), which includes the most stringent anti-pollution measures. The measures involve a complete ban on construction activities and the entry of non-essential polluting trucks into the city.



95% of villages declared ODF Plus till now: Govt

bout 95 per cent of villages have declared themselves "open defecation free plus" till now, the Jal Shakti ministry said on Thursday. The "ODF Plus" status goes beyond the construction of toilets, focusing on overall sanitation and solid-liquid waste management. Among the states, Uttar Pradesh leads with 93.947 villages attaining ODF Plus status. followed by Madhya Pradesh with 50,580 and Maharashtra with 37,327 villages. Smaller states and Union Territories, including Ladakh and Lakshadweep, have also made strides, achieving ODF Plus in all their villages. Responding to a question in Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Jal Shakti V Somanna said the Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (SBM-G) has reached a significant milestone, with 5,60,897 villages declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) Plus as of Tuesday. There are a total of 5,86,707 villages in the country. The ODF Plus villages are classified into "Aspiring," "Rising," and "Model" categories. For instance, Madhya Pradesh showed significant results in the "Model" category, with over 49,000

'India moving forward at 'unprecedented' speed'

PNS NEW DELHI

India was left behind in terms of modern weapons and technology but it moved towards self-reliance in the defence sector at an "unprecedented" pace after the Modi government came to power, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday.

In an address at an event, Singh said modern warfare is changing rapidly and there is a need to adopt high-end technology to deal with future and national security challenges.

The defence minister exhorted scientists and engineers to gain command over critical technologies, such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing in tune with the changing times, and urged them to never forget India's heritage. Singh was speaking at the Indian National Academy of Engineering's Annual Convention at IIT Delhi.

The defence minister emphasised that the niche technologies are going to impact almost every sector in a big way in the coming times.

"Right now, we are in the ini-

"Right now, we are in the initial phase. Our aim should be to first gain command over these technologies, so that in the future, they can be used for

the welfare of the people to fulfil their immediate basic needs," he said. Singh pointed to adopt high-end technology. Towards this, we have brought out schemes like Innovations for

ously evolving, and the defence sector cannot remain untouched by this change.

He stated that earlier, due to some reasons, India was left behind in terms of modern weapons and technology, but ever since the Modi government came to power, the country has moved towards self-reliance in defence at an unprecedented pace, according

"Modern warfare is changing rapidly, therefore there is a need

to the defence ministry.

out that the world is continu-

out schemes like Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) and Technology Development Fund (TDF) to bring out the talent of the youth, through which their as well as the nation's dreams can come true," he said. The iDEX was launched in 2018 to create an eco-system to foster innovations and encourage technological development in the defence and aerospace sector. Singh asserted that India is passing through a "defining moment" as it is exporting even those weapons which it once

The defence minister credited this "revolutionary transformation" to the collective efforts of the public and private sectors, academia, and engineers and innovators. He exuded confidence that the country will soon achieve a formidable technical edge in the global arena. Singh lauded the role of IITs in the scientific development of the country in collaboration with the Defence Research and Development Organisation and called for establishing an even better organic relationship among the industry, research and development organisations and academia.



You will be CM one day, Fadnavis tells Ajit Pawar

PNS ■ NAGPUR

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Thursday said he and his deputies Ajit Pawar and Eknath Shinde would work 24/7 in shifts.

"Ajit Pawar will work in the morning since he is an early riser. I am on duty from 12 noon to midnight while throughout the night... you all know who," Fadnavis said, referring to Shinde, who is known to work till late hours.

He was replying to a debate in the legislative assembly on the motion of thanks to the Governor for his joint address to both Houses of the state legislature during the ongoing Winter Session in Nagpur.

Turning to Ajit Pawar, Fadnavis said, "You are called 'permanent deputy CM'... but my wishes are with you... you will be the CM someday."

Ajit Pawar on December 5 took oath as the deputy CM of Maharashtra for the sixth time. The NCP leader, who has been vocal about his chief ministerial ambitions, split the Sharad Pawar-founded Nationalist Congress Party in 2023 and joined the BJP-led

Mahayuti government.

In the ensuing battle for the party name and its 'clock' symbol, his faction got both. His uncle and veteran politician Sharad Pawar now heads NCP (SP), an ally of the Congress and Shiv Sena (UBT) under the banner of the Maha Vikas Aghadi. After a severe drubbing in the Lok Sabha polls that saw NCP bagging only one seat, Ajit Pawar's party made an impressive comeback in the recently held assembly elections, emerging victorious in 41 of the 57 constituen-

cies where it was in the fray.

The Mahayuti alliance of BJP,
Shiv Sena and NCP won over 230
of the state's 288 assembly seats,
while MVA could manage to
grab only 46.

Modi reaffirms India-UK strategic partnership

PNS NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday spoke to UK's King Charles and reaffirmed India's commitment to strengthening the comprehensive strategic partnership.

During their discussion, they reflected on the historic relationship and emphasized their shared goal of fostering deeper collaboration in various areas. They reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the two nations which has been a cornerstone of bilateral relations, according to an official statement. The conversation also touched upon the Common wealth of Nations, with both leaders exchanging views on the cluded Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in Samoa.

Speaks to King Charles



Both countries are key members of the Common wealth and the dialogue highlighted their dedication to advancing the organization's goals.

Climate action and sustainability emerged as pivotal topics during the exchange.

Prime Minister Modi praised King Charles III for his longstanding advocacy on environmental issues and provided insights into India's initiatives in these areas, including efforts to combat climate change and promote green

CRAFT-FERRY CRASH

Toll rises to 14; Navy orders probe

PNS MUMBAI

The body of a man who was among the two missing passengers after a Navy craft rammed into their ferry off the Mumbai coast, was found on Thursday, taking the toll to 14, said

police as the Navy launched a probe into one of the deadliest crashes in the city's harbour area. A day after the crash, the body of the 43-year-old man was found near the ferry, police said. Search operation continues to locate a seven-year-old boy who is still missing, a police official added. A naval helicopter and boats

A naval helicopter and boats of the Navy and Coast Guard were deployed on Thursday to look for the missing passengers. Eight boats, including those from the Navy and Coast Guard are involved in the Search and Rescue (SAR) operation, the official said.



Of the 113 persons on board both the vessels, 14 died and 98, including two injured, were rescued. There were six persons on board the Navy craft, of which two survived, the official said.

The tragedy struck when the speeding Navy craft undergoing engine trials lost control and collided with passenger ferry 'Neel Kamal' off Karanja near Mumbai. The ferry carry-

ing more than 100 passengers was on its way from the Gateway of India to the Elephanta Island, a popular tourist attraction which has a collection of ancient cayes.

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Thursday told the state assembly that three persons injured in the boat tragedy included a four-year-old girl and an eightmonth pregnant woman.

Rahul Gandhi does not deserve to be Leader of Opposition: BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Accusing Rahul Gandhi of "pushing and shoving" its MPs on the Parliament premises, the BJP on Thursday said he does not deserve to be the Leader of Opposition after such "indecent and shameful" conduct.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters hours after unprecedented scenes of unruliness unfolded during protests by the ruling and opposition parties, Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan squarely put the blame on Gandhi for the fra-

cas which left two MPs injured.

"Rahul Gandhi does not deserve to hold the post of the Leader of Opposition,"

Chouhan said as he slammed



the Congress leader's behaviour and alleged it is against India's cultural ethos.

Candhi the Leader of

Gandhi, the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, has rejected the BJP's charge that he pushed its lawmakers and alleged that the ruling party MPs "stopped, threatened and intimidated" him.

Chouhan said that the party was also pained at the treatment meted out to its tribal MP from Nagaland S Phangnon Konya, who alleged in the Rajya Sabha that Rahul Gandhi shouted at her after coming in "close proximity" that made her feel uncomfortable during a demonstration outside the Parliament's Makar Dwar.

"Will physical strength be used in Parliament? Will musclemen and goondas come to Parliament? In which direction is the Congress taking the country's democracy?" said the BJP leader, who was flanked by Union Minister Piyush Goyal and party MPs Anurag Thakur and Anil Baluni. BJP MPs -- Pratap Sarangi and Mukesh Rajput -- were injured in the melee and

hospitalised as BJP and opposition MPs allegedly marched towards each other minutes before the start of the parliamentary proceedings.

"What happened Parliament today is unimaginable," Chouhan said as he accused Gandhi of pushing the BJP members, terming his conduct as "indecent, impudent and goondagardi". Such kind of behaviour cannot be imagined in a civilised society, he said. Chouhan claimed that when the BJP MPs were protesting, Gandhi "deliberatey" approached them and insisted on passing through them instead of using the space left on one side of the staircase of the Makar Dwar, used by members to enter and exit the

BJP indulging in distraction:Cong

Says Shah must resign for 'insulting' Ambedkar



PNS NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday accused the BJP of diverting attention from the issue of Home Minister Amit Shah's "insult" to BR Ambedkar, and demanded that Shah must resign and apologise for his remarks. The opposition party also alleged that the BJP is "anti-Constitution" and "anti-Ambedkar".

Addressing a joint press conference at the AICC head-quarters here, Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge and former party chief Rahul Gandhi condemned Shah's remarks on Ambedkar and said they would continue to protest across the country and that a movement against this had already begun.

"The BJP wants to divert attention from Shah's remarks on Ambedkar and that is why they are raising other issues," Kharge told reporters.

He said they (Congress leaders) were only demanding the resignation of Home Minister Shah and were

protesting "in support of our demands, but the BJP MPs blocked us from entering Parliament".

"They pushed me, I lost my balance and sat down," the Congress chief said, adding that he condemns Shah's remarks on Ambedkar. Kharge said they will run a

Kharge said they will run a nationwide movement raising the issue of Ambedkar's alleged insult by the home minister. Gandhi said the BJP-RSS thinking is "anti-Constitution" and "anti-Ambedkar". "The BJP is indulging in distraction. We want the apology and resignation of home minister over his remarks on Ambedkar," Gandhi said, adding that they would continue to raise their demand and the Adani issue.

Later, in a post on X, Gandhi said, "Amit Shah, Apologise and Resign." At the press conference, he said a few days ago, the issue of a case being filed against (Gautam) Adani in America came up, on which the BJP did not allow any discussion in the House for the entire session.

Air pollution linked to more hospitalisations for all causes

PNS NEW DEL

A research has found an increased hospital admissions for all causes, including mental illnesses, in relation to a long-term exposure to air pollution.

The Scottish study, published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) Open, found that a higher exposure to nitrogen dioxide (NO2) and particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5) combined was linked to a higher hospitalisations for cardiovascular, respiratory and infectious dis-

admissions for mental or behavioural disorders were associated with an increased exposure to nitrogen dioxide

eases. Researchers from the University of St Andrews, UK, found that for every one micron per cubic metre increase in PM2.5 and NO2 pollutants, the incidence for hospitalisations for respiratory conditions

rose by over four per cent and one per cent, respectively.

one per cent, respectively.
Further, higher hospital admissions for mental or behavioural disorders were associated with an increased exposure to nitrogen dioxide.
While the average yearly lev-

while the average yearly levels of NO2, PM10 and PM2.5 were lower than the 2005 World Health Organization guidelines, the levels of NO2 and PM2.5 were higher than those in the more recent 2021 guidelines, the team said. They added that previous studies analysing the

health impacts of long-term exposure to air pollution have tended to look at deaths, rather than hospital admissions. The study tracked 202,237

people (representing five per cent of the country's population), aged 17 and above, from the Public Health Scotland database between 2002 and 2017. "Air pollution was associated with higher rates of hospital admissions for both physical (eg, respiratory, cardiovascular and infectious) and mental/behavioural diseases," the authors wrote.



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-PAPER WITH PASSION-----

Clamour for caste census

While the exercise is fraught with challenges, its potential to uplift marginalised communities cannot be ignored

he demand for a caste census in India has been a recurring topic of debate, reflecting the country's complex socio-political fabric. While proponents emphasise its importance for targeted development and policy-making, critics raise concerns about its potential to exacerbate social divisions. The nuanced arguments surrounding this issue highlight both its necessity and its challenges. The caste census refers to the systematic collection of data on the caste composition of the population. India has not conducted such a comprehensive exercise since 1931, even though caste remains a significant determinant of socio-economic status in the country. Proponents of the caste census argue that it is essential for ensuring equitable development, especially for historically marginalised communities. As Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) leader Chirag Paswan points out, specific data on caste populations is critical for designing and allocating funds for community-based development



schemes. Paswan's endorsement of the caste census is pragmatic. However, he also issues a cautionary note: while the government should collect such data, making it public might deepen societal divisions by reinforcing caste identities.

A caste census would provide granular data on the socio-economic conditions of various communities. This information is crucial for crafting effective affirmative action policies and welfare programmes. Historical injustices and systemic exclusion of certain communities require targeted interventions. A caste census would help identify the actual beneficiaries of reservation policies and assess whether

they are achieving the intended outcomes. The Opposition, including Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, has emphasised that a caste census is a step toward realising the promise of social justice. By understanding the precise demographic composition, governments can ensure proportional representation and resource allocation. But having said that, making caste census data public could lead to heightened caste consciousness and further fragment society. India's socio-political landscape is already fraught with identity-based divisions, and the misuse of such data could deepen these fault lines. There is a legitimate fear that caste census findings might be weaponised for political gain. Instead of addressing inequities, the data could fuel caste-based mobilisations, electoral strategies and even conflicts. This aspect must be looked into and safeguarded before taking up this mammoth exercise. Besides, Conducting a caste census is a massive logistical challenge. The accuracy of data collection and classification would be critical, as any errors could lead to disputes and undermine the credibility of the exercise. The caste census is essential and must be conducted, but it requires careful attention to ensure its accuracy and to address potential repercussions.



A person dressed as Santa Claus rows a boat as seagulls fly past, near Causeway of Tapi River in Surat

Victory Day: Bangladesh's legacy of liberation



Victory Day serves as both a celebration of freedom and a reminder of the challenges ahead in safeguarding its democratic and inclusive aspirations

ictory Day holds profound significance for Bangladesh, marking its libera-tion and the triumph over the Pakistan Armed Forces in the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971. Celebrated annually on December 16, the day symbolises the birth of a sovereign state and the culmination of a long struggle for self-determination, where India played the pivotal role of midwife in the creation of the newest state in South Asia. The Bangladesh Liberation War was not merely a conflict confined to its borders but a defining moment in the geopolitics of the region. The roots of this war were entrenched in the systemic neglect and exploitation of East Pakistan by the ruling elite of West Pakistan.

Decades of economic disparity, cultural suppression, and political disenfranchisement laid the foundation for a movement demanding autonomy, which was catalyzed by the brutal military crackdown on March 25, 1971. Operation Searchlight unleashed a reign of terror that sought to silence the aspirations of millions but instead ignited a people's resistance. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the towering leader of the Awami League, became the symbol of this resistance. His leadership united the Bengali population, and his call for independence resonated with millions who yearned for freedom. As the conflict escalated, millions of refugees poured into India, creating a humanitarian crisis of unparalleled magnitude.

India's intervention under the leadership of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was both a strategic and moral decision. The Indian Armed Forces, working in coordination with the Mukti Bahini, mounted a joint operation that decisively defeated the Pakistani forces within a mere 13 days. The surrender of the Pakistani military on December 16, 1971, in Dhaka is one of the history. The image of General AAK Niazi signing the Instrument of Surrender in the presence of Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora remains etched in the collective memory of both nations. This marked not



Yet, Bangladesh defied the odds and began its journey toward self-reliance and growth. Over the past five decades, Bangladesh has transformed remarkably, earning the moniker "the garment factory of the world

Despite initial challenges, including political instability, natural disasters, and infrastructural deficits, Bangladesh has managed to sustain an impressive growth trajectory. Today, Bangladesh stands as a significant player in South Asia, with a GDP growth rate that often outpaces its neighbours. The country's success in achieving many of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in areas such as gender

BANGLADESH DEFIED THE ODDS AND **BEGAN ITS JOURNEY** TOWARD SELF-RELIANCE AND GROWTH. OVER THE PAST FIVE DECADES, BANGLADESH HAS **TRANSFORMED**

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GARMENT FACTORY

equality, education and healthcare, is commendable.

It has become a model for other developing nations, showcasing how strategic planning and a focus on human development can lead to sustained progress. Victory Day is not just a celebration of past triumphs but also a moment to reflect on the challenges and opportunities ahead.

The geopolitical landscape of South Asia has evolved significantly since 1971. While the ties with India remain strong, underpinned by historical bonds and mutual interests, Bangladesh has also embraced China's Belt and Road Initiative, balancing its foreign policy to maximise economic benefits.

Victory Day also underscores the importance of remembering the sacrifices that led to Bangladesh's independence. The war claimed the lives of countless freedom fighters and civilians, whose bravery and resilience paved the way for a new nation. The liberation struggle also left deep scars, including the atrocities committed by the Pakistani military, which continue to evoke

ibunals and to preserve the memory of the Liberation War are vital in honouring this legacy. As Bangladesh celebrates another Victory Day, it does so as a nation that has defied expectations and charted its path to

progress. The dreams of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Mukti Bahini have been realised in many ways, with a vibrant democracy, a thriving economy, and a resilient pop ulation. However, recent political instability has cast a shadow over Bangladesh's progress. The fall of Sheikh Hasina's Awami League, after years of dominance, has left a power vacuum, fueling uncertainty and unrest. Political polarisation has deepened, and concerns over democratic backsliding have surfaced. The status of minorities, particularly Hindus and indigenous groups, remains precarious, with reports of rising communal tensions and targeted violence. Ensuring minority rights and fostering inclusivity will be critical for Bangladesh to maintain its social fabric and democratic principles. The anniversary of Victory Day is a reminder of the enduring spirit of a people who fought for their right to self-determination and emerged victorious against overwhelming odds. It is a celebration of freedom, a tribute to those who made the ultimate sacrifice, and a pledge to build a future worthy of Efforts to bring justice through their dreams. Bangladesh's story born state to a thriving economy, stands as a beacon of hope and inspiration, not just for South Asia but for the

> (The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)

Vipul Nautiyal: Chandan Mitra's calamity reporter



Whether it was crafting flawless editorial pages or recounting tales of his newsroom days, Vipul Nautival's legacy is one of dedication, warmth and passion for his craft

e flaunted the title "calamity reporter" with pride as he vividly narrated the story behind how Dr Chandan Mitra, editor-in-chief of The Pioneer, gave him the name. Known to friends as Nauty (that's how he spelled it) and to juniors as Vipul Sir, or Nauty Sir, I was introduced to him in August 2021, while writing a test for an editorial role at The Pioneer. I hadn't met him before, but had heard things about him — his co-workers respected him, but they feared him even more. It was my first stint in the media and I was nervous.

I was supposed to join his team and work on the Edit and Oped pages. By the time I was almost done with the test, I was looking around wondering who Mr Nautival could be. That was when an old-looking fellow, who was humbly dressed and had uncombed hair and a grey beard, looked at me and said: "Cheating kara du"? I laughed it off. This couldn't have been the Vipul Nautiyal I had been told about. But then an HR executive arrived and my paper was handed over to him. I was interviewed and Headlines were paid even there for his colleagues -



ended up addressing this "old-looking, "old-looking, humbly dressed" fellow as "Vipul Sir" ever since. I learned an important lesson that day. Nevertheless, I was hired. A few weeks of working with him I realised that he was extremely honest towards his job, so much so that he made me question myself. He would reach the office sharp at 2 pm, retouch his already super-organised desk and begin the thinking work often with a glass in his hand. He was proud of the work he did, he knew he was good. He had an impeccable eye for detail — if it was Vipul Nautiyal's page then it had to be error-free, even if nobody was going to read it, even if he hadn't been paid in months.

perfectly symmetric — a habit that I picked involuntarily. This was the Vipul effect. He once recounted an incident from his days at The Times of India, when Dr Mitra had he told me to ask for a masasked him to return to The Pioneer. Later, during the exit interview at TOI, when Mr Nautiyal was asked "TOI chhod kar Pioneer kaun jata hai?" (Who leaves TOI to join Pioneer) he replied with lit-up eyes: "Jisko Chandan Mitra bulaata hai." He knew how to efficiently run a desk and bring the team up to speed with some flair.

A senior editor at TOI says, 'Vipul Sir could beat you in a game of table tennis singlehandedly, with his favourite drink in his other hand." Mr Nautiyal often mentioned that he received job offers from almost all leading media houses, except for The Indian Express, for which, he said, he waited for quite some time. In my five months of working with him, I never saw him snap at anybody — unless somebody caught him on the phone during work hours. He was known to be unpredictable at times. But he was

more attention, they had to be those who worked with him will agree. His way of getting his point across was his own. When I had to negotiate my salary while joining TOI where he had referred me sive raise, saying: "Purse bhaley hi HR ke paas hai, but tu journalist hai, boli tu lagayega" (Even though the purse is with HR, you are a ournalist, so you will call the shots). He had more confidence in me than I had in myself. Those who teamed up with him absorbed a great deal of wisdom in all walks of

That's how Vipul Nautiyal was. Besides being an exceptional storyteller, he had a song, a sher or an anecdote for almost every occasion. He was a fanboy when it came to Dev Anand. He often wrote an editorial piece on Dev Sahab's birth anniversary. He was proud of the fact that he had seen Guide several times. He would often play Mohammed Rafi songs or Mehdi Hassan ghazals, lower the volume, and write the edit columns.

(The writer is a former staffer of The Pioneer; views are personal)

G7 FACES CRISES

Madam — The 'Group of Seven' or G7 countries are considered to be the group of the richest countries in the world. But after the Covid pandemic, their economic condition also seems to be almost in shambles. Especially three of those countries can be named here, in which political turmoil has been seen within the last 10 days. Those countries are Germany, the biggest economic power in Europe. France, the third biggest economy there, and the North American country Canada. In France, four prime ministers have been sworn in within the last one year. Emmanuel Macron's government can fall at any time. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz had announced the dismissal of Finance Minister Christian Lindner, citing breach of trust and economic policy differences. Now he himself has lost the vote of confidence.

Due to which elections will be held again there in the coming February. On the other hand, Canada's Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland, has resigned from her post, citing disagreement with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. She has expressed disagreement on how to respond to the tariff threat of incoming President Donald Trump. Meaning, here too the main reason for instability is 'economic and financial' problems. France has been affected by Europe's energy crisis and high interest rates, which have weakened the country. In 2024, Europe's largest economy will be stuck in recession for the second consecutive year. More and more businesses are under pressure and are suffering from falling sales, high energy costs and taxes, and Germany's overly cumbersome bureaucracy. Starting from 2022, per capita production in Canada has declined in six of the last seven quarters. Unemployment has also increased by a full percentage point compared to last year. Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

TRUMP DEMANDS EQUAL TARIFFS

R Ashwin retires from international cricket

EEDIT

avichandran Ashwin, India's second-high-Rest Test wicket-taker (only behind Anil Kumble's 619 wickets), announced his retirement from international cricket at the age of 38. He expressed gratitude to his teammates and the BCCI, highlighting his fulfilling career. While he feels he still has more to offer, he'll focus on club-level cricket. Ashwin concluded his international career with 537 Test wickets, 156 ODI wickets and 72 T20I wickets. His crick-

has proposed a "Reciprocal Tariff" policy, signalling a new direction in global trade. Criticising the high tariff policies of countries, including India, he highlighted them as a source of inequity. Trump stated that if any country imposes tariffs on American products, the US will respond with equivalent tariffs. He specifically pointed to developing countries like Índia, which levy high tariffs to protect domestic industries. Using bicycles as an example, he alleged that India imposes over 100 per cent duty on American bicycles, while the US does not charge such high tariffs on Indian products.

This policy, claimed to be based on reciprocity and fairness, is likely to promote protectionism, potentially destabilising the global trade system. It raises concerns about increasing trade tensions between India and the US Higher product prices could add economic burdens on consumers and strain bilateral relations. For India, it is crucial to engage Madam — Donald Trump, the newly elected President of the United States, to maintain trade balance. This tariff

et journey, from a fringe player in the 2011 World Cup to one of India's greatest match-winners, has been marked by trials, triumphs, and unwavering dedication. Despite overseas challenges and controversies, his innovative approach and analytical mind have solidified his place in crick-

world.

eting history. The 38-year-old Ashwin, with 537 Test wickets and six centuries, will continue playing franchise cricket, notably for Chennai Super Kings in the next edition of the IPL in 2025. We should not forget that Ashwin is the man who played his cricket all through with cleverness and dignity and decided to retire cleverly and in a dignified manner too. We should not be ungrateful and miss recognising and saluting him for his immense contribution to Indian cricket after Anil Kumble hung up his boots. Love you, champion!! Cricket lovers will miss you for sure! Bhagwan Thadani Mumbai

conflict will not be limited to economic impacts; it will also have far-reaching diplomatic and social consequences. R K Jain | Barwani

TABLA MAESTRO'S LEGACY

Madam — Zakir Hussain's music was intertwined with his all-encompassing love for everyone without an iota of bias or prejudice. In fact, it reminds one of a popular Kishore Kumar number, 'Pyaar Baantte Chalo" (Keep spreading love), from the 1965 Hindi movie "Hum sab ustaad hain."

Apart from his divine renditions on the tabla, what endeared him most to his audiences was the halo of love and humility that surrounded him. In an interview with the BBC, he once said that all his shows were sold out well in advance, not because of him, but because of the power and attraction of

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

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FIRST COLUMN

SRI LANKA-INDIA: ON THE SAME PAGE

Both nations reiterate commitment to defence collaboration and regional stability



KUMARDEEP BANARJEE

ndia strengthened its ties with its closest maritime neighbor, Sri Lanka, this week, countering the growing influence of China in the island nation. Sri Lanka's President, H.E. Mr. Anura Kumara Dissanayaka, made his first bilateral visit to New Delhi following the recent presidential and parliamentary elections. Earlier this year, President Dissanayaka had also visited Delhi at a time when Sri Lanka's political future, including the timing of its elections, was still uncertain. The new President came to power riding on the left-leaning party, which is known to have harboured some Anti-Indian sentiments in the past. However, New Delhi chose to bet on the relatively young Marxist leader, hoping for a sense of prudence in future. Disnayaka in the past, has managed to maintain a fine balance in Sri Lanka's bilateral relations with India and China, not trying to get caught in any crossfire.

Meanwhile, while India's military tensions with China have de-escalated in the recent past, it still chooses to be cautious. Special Representatives from India and China also met this week in Beijing, to discuss their mutual bilateral relations. It seems that with the Trump administration back in the Oval Office in January, China wants to de-escalate military tensions with countries it considers as rivals. China is aware that Trump is likely to impose tariffs on many of its exports to the US, and perhaps further tighten the transfer of high-end technology from America. It is acutely aware that, India would not join an economic dialogue unless the overarching military issues are sorted. It is against this background, that Sri Lankan President's visit to India assumes significance. It may be recalled that China had in the past, sent spy ships



(which it calls maritime research vehicles) to Sri Lankan waters, which have raised many red flags for the Indian security agencies.

China also controls critical ports in Sri Lanka, which during any military conflict could be used for strategic purposes. Sri Lanka's President is aware of his country's dependence on China to keep its economy afloat, while, also not trying to disturb the deep bilateral partnership with India. It was heartening for policy watchers in India to note that the Sri Lankan President chose Delhi to be his port of call after getting elected and came out with some emphatic statements, regarding not allowing, their national territory to be used for any anti-India activities. The joint statement released after the President and Indian PM"s meeting read "Recognising shared security interests of India and Sri Lanka, both leaders acknowledged the importance of regular dialogue based on mutual trust and transparency and giving primacy to each other's security concerns. India is Sri Lanka's closest maritime neighbour, President Disanayaka reiterated Sri Lanka's stated position of not permitting its territory to be used in any manner inimical to the security of India and towards regional sta-

Taking cognisance of India's security concerns the two nations further reiterated to "Explore the possibility of concluding a framework Agreement on Defence Cooperation; Foster cooperation in hydrography; Provision of defence platforms and assets to augment Sri Lanka's defence capabilities; Intensify collaboration through joint exercises, maritime surveillance, and defence dialogue and exchanges; Extend assistance to strengthen capabilities of Sri Lanka on disaster mitigation, relief and rehabilitation, including through training, joint exercises and sharing of best practices; and Enhance capacity building and training for Sri Lankan defence forces and conduct tailor-made training programmes, wherever required." The bedrock of this relationship is India's generous economic support to Sri Lanka without putting it through non-transparent, selfserving infrastructure loans, which has led to the loss of strategic ports for the island nation.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

The evolution of cinema through technology



Whether through sound, colour, digital effects, or immersive technology, filmmakers have always sought to expand the boundaries of what is possible



eneath the flickering lights of an old projector, cinema was born dance of shadows and light, whispering stories into the dark. From silent dreams projected on silver screens to the roaring worlds of colour and sound, cinema has always been a magician, conjuring entire universes with the stroke of a reel. As technology sprinkled its magic dust over time, the cinematic world transformed, evolving from simple moving pictures into immersive journeys that now wrap us in their digital embrace, where imagination knows no bounds.In the late 19th century, cinema was a purely visual experience. Films like Raja Harishchandra (1913), India's first feature film, relied entirely on visuals, as sound was not yet a part of cinematic storytelling. Globally, the Lumière brothers' early works, such as L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat (1895), left audiences mesmerised.

The technology was simple—manual cameras, mechanical projectors, and natural light. But this early era laid the foundation for the visual storytelling techniques that filmmakers would continue to refine for decades to come. The advent of sound in cinema was a game-changer. Alam Ara (1931) became India's first talkie, marking the beginning of an era where dialogue and music played a crucial role in storytelling. Globally, The Jazz Singer (1927) made similar waves, showcasing the transformative power of synchronized sound. Colour, too, began to seep into cinema's world. While Kisan Kanya (1937) was India's first colour film, it wasn't until Mughal-e-Azam (1960) and Hum Dono (1961) that colour became a truly artistic element, bringing emotional depth and

grandeur to the screen. The partially colourised Mughal-e-Azam in particular stunned audiences, giving the larger-than-life historical drama a visual vibrancy that was previously unimaginable. Ramesh Sippy's Sholay (1975) was a groundbreaking film, being the first Indian movie shot on a 70mm screen. Indian theatres were not initially equipped to accommodate this scale, but the format gave Sholay's action sequences a larger-than-life feel, adding to its epic narrative. The film also introduced enhanced stereophonic sound, a novelty in Indian cin-



LIGHT. BUT THIS of storytelling.

ema. Shan (1980) followed, introducing impressive special effects such as explosions, action choreography, and stunt sequences, drawing com-parisons to Western films like James Bond, with a blend of spectacle and style that had rarely been seen in India. The onset of digital technology and CGI changed the landscape of Indian cinema in the 2000s. THE TECHNOLOGY (2011) ushered in a new era of superhero films and fathering in the 2000s.

HE TECHNOLOGY
WAS SIMPLE—
WAS SIMPLE—
WANUAL
MANUAL
CAMERAS,
MECHANICAL
PROJECTORS,
AND NATURAL
LIGHT. BUT THIS

(2011) ushered in a new era of superhero films and futuristic themes, using advanced CGI and motion capture. Robot (2010), featuring a humanoid robot protagonist, combined impressive VFX with engaging storytelling, marking a turning with technology. As CGI became increasingly prevalent, Hollywood and Indian cinema both embraced digital effects as a core component

EARLY ERA LAID The Matrix (1999) showcased the THE FOUNDATION films like Baahubali (2015-2017) set FOR THE VISUAL

STORYTELLING
TECHNIQUES
THAT

THAT

films like Baahubali (2015-2017) set new standards with their breathtaking visual effects, making Indian cinema a global player in the visual effects arena. R (2022) followed suit, pushing the envelope with dynamic CGI-enhanced action FILMMAKERS more immersive than ever. James WOULD Cameron's Avatar (2009) brought 3D to the forefront of mainstream cin-CONTINUE TO ema, while Indian cinema explored REFINE FOR like Kaala (2018), which offered a DECADES TO Technologies like VR and AI are now beginning to merge with traditional filmmaking, pushing the boundaries of storytelling even

further. Technological advancements have transformed both the creative and commercial aspects of cinema, allowing films to evolve into multifaceted brands. Innovations like high-definition cameras, VFX, and animation have significantly elevat-

ed the quality of filmmaking, enabling large-scale productions such as RRR and Baahubali to create immersive experiences that attract global audiences.

These technological tools have expanded the branding potential of films, positioning them as not just stories, but as global entertainment products. Furthermore, the media and entertainment sector's growth, particularly in India, reflects this shift, with theatrical revenues reaching an all-time high of INR 120 billion in 2023? The business model of cinema has expanded beyond traditional box-office revenue, thanks to digital platforms like OTT services, which offer new avenues for distribution and monetisation. These platforms provide filmmakers with the opportunity to market their films globally, turning local content into international brands. Films now capitalise on multiple revenue streams, including merchandising, digital rights, and exclusive streaming deals. Additionally, high-end multiplexes have begun focusing on premium cinematic experiences, creating "experience zones" that cater to affluent audiences and further enhance the brand identity of

Cinema has also become a significant platform for advertising and brand collaborations. FMCG, e-commerce, and tech companies increasingly use films for product placements and promotions, contributing to the industry's revenue.

Meanwhile, Indian films are reaching wider audiences across 160 countries, thanks to advancements in content production and global distribution. This expanded global reach is turning Indian cinema into a formidable international brand, with films frequently topping global streaming charts, further proving that technological advancements are integral to both the branding and business of cinema? Recently released films like

Kalki 2898 AD and Stree 2 have pushed the envelope for Indian cinema by leveraging advanced CGI and innovative storytelling techniques. Kalki 2898 AD embraced futuristic narratives, with its visually rich depiction of a dystopian future made possible through cutting-edge visual effects, similar to global sci-fi films. Stree 2 blended horror, comedy, and CGI to craft a unique, immersive experience, further proving that Indian filmmakers are increasingly adept at balancing narrative depth with technological prowess, placing them on the global stage. From the early days of silent films to today's CGI-driven spectacles, cinema has continuously evolved with technological advancements.

Whether through sound, colour, digital effects, or immersive technology, filmmakers have always sought to expand the boundaries of what's possible The future of cinema technology promises exciting advancements. Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) are set to provide even more immersive storytelling experiences, allowing audiences to interact with cinematic worlds in unprecedented ways. Artificial intelligence (AI) is also emerging in post-production, helping streamline visual effects and editing processes. Additionally, innovations in 3D and holographic projections could redefine how we experience films in theatres and at home. Advances in sound technology, like spatial audio, will make the viewing experience more immersive, ensuring cinema continues to evolve. The cinematic journey, it seems, is far from over—technology is pushing the boundaries further, transforming both the art of storytelling and the

(The writer is a former additional DG, DFF and Festival Director, IFFI; views are personal. Inputs by Zoya Ahmad and Vaishnavi

Rajasthan's Golden Horizon: From cultural marvel to investment powerhouse

With the success of 'Rising Rajasthan Investment Summit 2024,' the state is poised for an economic transformation

Sone ri dharti jathe-ar chandi ro aasman - translates to "Where the earth is made of gold and the sky is built with silver." This cherished folk song beautifully captures the essence of Rajasthan's Thar Desert. Today, these words remain as relevant as ever, reflecting the state's unique charm and its emergence as a hub of global investment opportunities. Rajasthan, India's largest state, is rich in minerals, endowed with vast solar and wind energy resources, and brimming with potential for investors worldwide.

Rajasthan's allure.
It boasts nine UNESCO

has successfully hosted the Summit 2024' in Jaipur this week. Throughout the event, Combined with excellent law



MOHIT TANTIA

memorandums of understanding (MOUs) totalling over Rs 35 lakh crore were signed, highlighting the immense investment potential of the state. Actually, very few places can match

The Rajasthan Government World Heritage Sites, iconic palaces and forts, 320 sunny 'Rising Rajasthan Investment days a year, powerful winds,

and order and robust rail connectivity, these factors place Rajasthan in a league of its own as a destination for investment. Currently, the state is undergoing an economic transformation. The government aims to propel Rajasthan's economy from \$180 billion to \$350 billion by enhancing the Ease of Doing Business and creating employment opportunities for the youth.

Over the next five years, the administration seeks to generate one million jobs across private and public sectors, with a focus on attracting significant investments. Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma envisions Rajasthan as a pivotal player in India's economic growth. His and second-largest rail net-administration is fostering a work in India, along with tric vehicles, and renewable Rajasthan's journey from a strengths, the "Rising economic growth. His

pro-business environment across industries, recognising that Rajasthan's development is integral to achieving the vision of a "Developed India" by 2047. Rajasthan's rich natural resources, skilled workforce, and outstanding connectivity make it a magnet for investments. Over 58 per cent of the

Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) and 39 per cent of the Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) pass through the state. This infrastructure connects Rajasthan to domestic and export markets, while its proximity to northern states and western ports ensures seamless trade access. With the third-largest national highway network and second-largest rail net-



nine inland container depots, seven airports, and an air cargo complex, Rajasthan is a logistical powerhouse. Rajasthan's investment prospects span diverse sectors: petroleum infrastructure, food processing, education, chemicals, electronic

energy. Traditional industries like tourism, and emerging fields like startups, also offer immense For instance, in agriculture

and agro-processing, Rajasthan is a top producer of mustard, millet, guar gum, fenugreek, isabgol, and medicinal crops. The sector contributed 29 per cent to the state's Gross State Value Added (GSVA) in 2022-23. The state also ranks second in livestock population and milk production and is a leader in spices, organic farming, and coarse wool. With these advantages, the agriculture sector presents vast opportunities in agrifood parks, warehousing, and cold chain facilities.

cultural and historical treasure to a thriving investment hub reflects its unparalleled potential and forward-looking vision. The state's abundant natural resources, excellent infrastructure, and strategic location make it an ideal destination for investors across various sectors, from renewable energy and agriculture to manufacturing and technology.

With an ambitious economic transformation underway, Rajasthan's government is committed to creating a probusiness environment that will not only attract global investments but also create employment opportunities for its youth.

As the state continues to

Rajasthan" initiative stands as a testament to its growing prominence on the global

The government's efforts, backed by strategic partnerships and forward-thinking policies, position Rajasthan as a key player in India's economic future, driving growth, prosperity, and development.

The initiative seeks to bolster Rajasthan's industries, create jobs, and amplify its economic potential, ensuring the timeless folk song "Sone ri dharti jathe-ar chandi ro aasman" resonates on a glob-

(The writer is Executive Member, National Institute for Locomotor Disabilities. Kolkata. Views expressed are personal)

VIJAYAWADAI FRIDAY | DECEMBER 20, 2024

IN BRIEF



NTPC plans to set up nuclear project in Bihar

Ower giant NTPC has plans to set up a nuclear project in Bihar, a move which will increase its non fossil energy portfolio, the company's Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) Gurdeep Singh said on Thursday. NTPC has also requested the state government for a land parcel at a suitable location to take forward its nuclear plans, he said addressing a session at the 'Bihar Business Connect 2024' summit here.

"Looking at the future of the energy sector, nuclear (energy) is expected to become extremely important for the energy sector, 20-30 years down the line. I want to share that NTPC is now entering the nuclear energy space," Singh said. Without sharing any further details, he said NTPC will conduct a study before taking ahead the plans to set up the nuclear project in the state

On September 11, the Indian government gave its approval to the Anushakti Vidhyut Nigam Ltd (ASHVINI), a joint venture of Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd – NPCIL (51 per cent) and NTPC (49 per cent) to build, own and operate nuclear power plants in India in accordance with provisions of the Atomic Energy Act.



Air India places order for 34 trainer aircraft

ir India has placed an order for 34 trainer aircraft, ncluding 31 single engine planes, for its flying training organisation in Maharashtra that is expected to come up by the second half of 2025. The order includes 31 singleengine aircraft from piper aircraft in the US and three twinengine planes from Austria-based Diamond Aircraft, the airline said in a release on Thursday. The Flying Training Organisation (FTO) is being set up at Belora airport in Amravati, Maharashtra. It is expected to be operational by the second half of next year post-regulatory approvals. Sunil Bhaskaran, Director of Air India's Aviation Academy, said the FTO will help in building a self-reliant ecosystem of qualified pilots for both Air India and the country's aviation industry. The Tata Group-owned airline has opened its new Aviation Training Academy in Gurugram, Haryana



Bharat Mobility to see higher footfalls: EEPC

he second edition of the Bharat Mobility Global Expo, scheduled to be held at three different venues in the National Capital and Great Noida, is expected to see more than three times footfalls this year compared to the inaugural version year, Engineering Exports Promotion Council (EEPC) said here on Thursday. It is also expecting a higher participation from the exhibitors. The council also said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi may inaugurate the six-day Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025. To be spread across more than 2,00,000 sq metres with concurrent shows, featuring automobile, auto component and construction equipment segments, among others, across three venues -- Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi. Yashobhoomi in Dwarka (West Delhi) and the India Expo Centre & Mart in Greater Noida, the mega event is likely to see half-a-million visitors this year compared to 1.5 lakh visitors at the 2024 edition, EEPC Chairman Pankaj Chadha told reporters here.

Women hold only 10 pc **KMP** positions in India: Report

PNS MUMBAI

Women constitute less than 20 per cent of the overall workforce, and only 10 per cent hold key managerial personnel (KMP) positions even as companies are making efforts for diversity, according to a report.

Women constitute less than 20 per cent of the overall workforce and hold just over 10 per cent of KMP positions, while female directors account for less than 20 tors account for less than 20 per cent of the total board director positions, according to the 'Mind the Gender Gap' report by CFA Institute and CFA Society India.

The 'Mind the Gender

Gap' report is based on insights from 300 Indian companies through their Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report (BRSR) disclosures. The report also revealed

that women board members and KMPs receive significantly lower compensation compared to their male counterparts, highlighting a gen-der pay disparity at the top

Female directors earn only

India, US need to together lower tariffs, stresses US Ambassador

indianexpress.com

DEA CHANG

US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti on Thursday said India is the "highest tariff" major economy in the world and New Delhi and Washington need to work together to lower tariffs to increase trade for making it "fair and equal".

His comment comes days after US President-elect Donald Trump said that India charges "a lot" of tariff, reiterating his intention to impose reciprocal tariffs in retaliation for what New Delhi will impose on the import of certain American products.

Addressing an event organ-ised by the US-India Business Council (USIBC) here, Garcetti observed that as the two countries "become closer", they are able to be "more blunt" with each other.

"... We need together to lower tariffs, not to see them go up. We need together to increase trade and to make it more fair and equal. We need to together make sure that there's training and talent that meets the needs of companies on both sides of the Indo Pacific," Garcetti, the United States (US) Ambassador to India, said.

In an interactive session after his address, Garcetti pointed out that "despite the difficulties on both sides", the India-US bilateral trade has witnessed a '10-fold increase", with America becoming the country's number one trading part-

... I think that as you hear, as recently as yesterday, President-elect Trump talk about trade and how tariffs need to be done fairly, let us have honest conversations. I think it's helpful for us to speak bluntly, but let us use that as a starting point to negotiate much more deeply than we do," the US Ambassador to India

He further outlined that even though the US and India don't really talk in ambitious ways about trade, yet the two countries have expanded trade ten-fold since 2001.

Garcetti urged his audience to imagine what the two countries could achieve if they actually sat down and had all these conversations

indianexpress

"Imagine what we could do if we actually sat down and had all these conversations... The US, could say you might be down 95 per cent from what tariffs used to be, but it's still the highest tariff major economy in the world, here in India. And too often, there are barriers that take too long and are too arbitrary, and everything from labour to land, as we have too in the United States," he assert-

Trump has repeatedly claimed that India is a "tariff king" and imposes "tremendously high" tariffs on American products.

He has criticised India's "big tariffs" on American paper products and the iconic Harley-Davidson bikes.

Diversify into ethanol-diesel, green hydrogen production Govt urges sugar industry

PNS NEW DELHI

Road, Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday called upon the sugar industry to explore multiple avenues for diversification, including ethanol-diesel blending and green hydrogen production.

Addressing the annual general meeting of the Indian Sugar and Bio-Energy Manufacturers Association (ISMA) virtually, the minister emphasised the need for setting up ethanol and CNG pumps, including through private sector participation.

There is a huge potential for flex engines, ethanol-based engines, and bioCNG as alternatives to fossil fuels.

Five automakers including Tatas, Suzuki, and Toyota are set to launch flex engine fuel cars in the market, he said and urged the tractor makers to start manufacturing tractors on alternative fuels.

The minister suggested examining possibilities of exporting ethanol to neighbouring countries like

Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka to expand market opportunities.

Bio-bitumen production using lignin and biomass sources, along with green hydrogen generation from sugar industry infrastructure, were highlighted as potential

areas for expansion.

He emphasised the potential of green hydrogen as an alternative fuel source and suggested using existing infrastructure in the sugar and ethanol industries to produce green hydro-

gen.
"I know that making sugar is but at the not an attractive job, but at the same time, because of ethanol, CNG, hydrogen and other byproducts, we can increase the productivity and profitability in the industry," he said.

"The industry must focus on increasing sugarcane productivity through modern techniques like nano-fertilizers and drone spraying," the minister said.

The government will also consider the industry's request for sugar exports and minimum selling price (MSP), the minister said.

Gold, silver prices plummet due to muted demand

PNS NEW DELHI

Gold and silver prices fell sharply in the national capital on Thursday due to a muted demand by jewellers amid a weak global trend, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity plunged Rs 800 to Rs 78,300 per 10 grams. It closed at Rs

79,100 per 10 grams in the previous trading session on Wednesday. Traders

said the bullion prices slipped as the US Federal Reserve Chair

Ierome Powell takes a stance after the US central bank decided to cut interest rates. The Fed now projects just rate reductions by the end of

September estimate of four rate cuts earlier, they added. Silver also plummeted Rs

2025, down from their

2,000 to Rs 90,000 per kg on Thursday. The white metal settled at Rs 92,000 per kg in previous close.

The price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity slumped Rs 800 to Rs 77,900 per 10 grams against the previous close of Rs 78,700 per 10 grams on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, in futures trade on the MCX, gold contracts for February delivery dipped Rs 303, or 0.4 per cent, to trade at Rs 76,350 per 10 grams.

Silver contracts March delivery declined Rs 1,630 or 1.8 per cent to Rs 88,750 per kg on the bourse. Comex gold

futures in the Asian trading session fell USD 19.10 per ounce, or 0.72 per cent, to USD 2,634.10 per ounce.

"Gold fell sharply post-Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting as the Fed's indication of a slower pace of interest rate cuts than previously estimated for the next year," Saumil Gandhi, Analyst Commodities at HDFC Securities, said

Sebi defers **ESG** disclosure deadline

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi has decided to defer the ESG disclosure deadline for value chain partners of listed companies by one year until FY26, giving more time to them to comply with the Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) requirements.

Until then, environmental, social and governance (ESG) reporting will remain voluntary instead of the current "comply-andexplain" approach.

The proposal, approved by Sebi's board on

Wednesday, is aimed at enhancing ease of doing business for listed companies and their value chain partners in meeting BRSR requirement.

The Sebi's board and updates for ESG disclo-

These include "deferring ESG disclosures for value chain", as well as "assessment or assurance" thereof, by one year.

Investors' wealth erodes by Rs 9.65 lakh cr in four days

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth eroded by Rs 9.65 lakh crore in four days of sharp decline in the equity market where the BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 2,915

In the past four days, the BSE benchmark slumped 2,915.07 points or 3.54 per

Falling for the fourth day running on Thursday, the 30share BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 964.15 points or 1.20 per cent to settle at 79,218.05. During the day, the blue-chip index cracked 1,162.12 points or 1.44 per cent to 79,020.08.

Tracking the weak trend in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms eroded by Rs 9,65,935.96 crore to Rs 4,49,76,402.63 crore (USD

5.29 trillion) in four days.
"Markets were plunde tracking negative global cues as benchmark indices slipped below their psychological levels on broad-based selling after the US Fed's hawkish stance raised concerns over further rate cuts next year.



pushed global currencies, including the rupee to new lows while renewed foreign fund outflows from domestic equities could prompt investors to turn risk averse," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

From the 30 blue-chip pack, Infosys, Bajaj Finserv, JSW Steel, Asian Paints, Bajaj Finance ICICI Bank Industries, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, Tata Motors and Tech Mahindra were the biggest laggards.

On the other hand, Sun Pharma, Hindustan Unilever and Power Grid were the gain-

Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower. European markets were trading in the negative territo-

ry. Wall Street ended sharply lower on Wednesday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,316.81

crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data. As many as declined while 1,680 advanced and 100 remained unchanged

on the BSE. The BSE midcap gauge declined 0.30 per cent and smallcap index dipped 0.28 per cent.

India's job market projected to grow 9 pc, says Report

PNS MUMBAI

Hiring activities in 2025 are likely to witness a 9 per cent growth in the country driven by sectors, including IT, retail, telecommunications and banking, financial services, and insurance (BFSI) sectors, a report said on Thursday.

According to the latest data from jobs and talent platform foundit (formerly Monster APAC & ME) there will be a 9 per cent hiring growth in the country in 2025, led by IT, retail, telecommunications, and BFSI sectors.

With a 10 per cent growth in 2024 and 3 per cent sequential growth in November, the forecast indicates that hiring is set



to retain its momentum, with a predictable hiring environment, said the report.

Emerging technologies and evolving business priorities are likely to further shape India's job market in 2025, it noted. Innovations such as edge computing, quantum applica-

tions, and cybersecurity

advancements are set to trans-

form industries like manufacturing, healthcare, and IT, it added. The report is based on an analysis of data on foundit insights tracker during January 2023 to November 2024.

Meanwhile, the report further stated that the rise of retail media networks and AI-driven workforce analytics will reshape talent needs in e-com-

merce, HR and digital services. Organisations will look for professionals skilled in digital marketing, ad management, and HR analytics. 'As we enter 2025, India's

job market looks set to broaden its horizons, with a projected 9 per cent growth in hiring. Companies are not only looking for seasoned professionals but also broadening their search beyond established hubs," foundit Vice President -Marketing, Anupama Bhimrajka said. The report also highlighted that India's job market has shown robust growth in 2024, across sectors and cities when compared to 2023, despite seasonal dispar-

Commerce ministry may face possible repeat of 2011 trade data error

PNS NEW DELHI

The commerce ministry this time around may witness a repeat of 2011 when a discrepancy of about USD 9 billion was detected in the trade data for the April-November

period. This time, the issue involves suspected errors in calculating gold import fig
arecord USD 37.84 billion in November.

November 2024. In 2011, there over-reporting of export data on account of miss-classifications and double count-

ing due to problems in the computer software, which was getting upgraded. Noticing an unusual surge

in the gold imports in November this year, pushing the country's trade deficit to a record, a commerce ministry official on Wednesday said that DGCIS (Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics) has taken up detailed examination of the gold import data and reconciliation would be done with the data received by CBIC (Central Board of Indirect Taxes and

Customs).

The country's gold imports in November reached a record high of USD 14.86 billion, registering a four-fold increase, mainly on account of festival and wedding demands. The jump in gold imports pushed the trade deficit (the difference between imports and exports) to a record USD

Trade experts and jewellers have mixed opinions on the matter, with some suspecting a possi-ble error in the data compilation, while others are stating

that doublecounting is "very" unlikely. The downward correction

in import data, if any, would lower the trade deficit figures, they added. The gold import data in

November looks different. It should not be this much high," an official of the gems and jewellery industry said.

However, a trade expert said that it is "very" unlikely that the bill of entry data has been double-counted.

Economic think tank GTRI said there is speculation that some gold imported may have been doublecounted.

78 PC SMBS IN INDIA USE AI

Majority see increase in revenue: Report

PNS NEW DELHI

As many as 78 per cent of SMBs in India using artificial intelligence (AI) have reported revenue growth, according to a report.

The 6th edition of the 'Small & Medium Business Trends' report by Salesforce surveyed 3,350 leaders from Small and Medium-sized Businesses (SMBs) across 26 countries, and highlighted a growing trend among SMBs to adopt AI technologies to enhance their oper-

ations and drive revenue. The report said 78 per cent of Indian SMBs are either using or experimenting with AI, with automated service chatbots, marketing campaign optimisation, and content generation as

their top 3 use cases. According to the report, 93 per cent of Indian SMBs surveyed said AI has helped increase revenues.

'Small businesses are demonstrating that innovation



and growth are not limited by size. By leveraging AI-driven unlocking efficient ways to technologies such as

autonomous agents, SMBs are scale--delivering personalised

mising back-office operations, Arun Kumar Parameswaran, Managing Director--Sales, Salesforce Despite the optimistic out-

customer experiences and opti-

look, the report also revealed challenges faced by SMB lead-

The report said 41 per cent of respondents expressed concerns about being left behind in the AI race, indicating a sense of urgency to adopt these tech-

Additionally, 60 per cent find it challenging to keep pace with rapidly evolving technology, while some feel they lack the time to master all the tech

Trust remains a paramount issue in the age of AI.

their company employs.

91 per cent of Indian SMBs surveyed would prefer to invest in technology from trusted vendors, reflecting growing concerns over security and compliance, it said.

what's brewing?

Shehnaaz Gill's *Ikk Kudi* in cinemas on June 13, 2025

Punjabi cinema is set to witness yet another heartwarming and compelling story as *Ikk Kudi*, starring the immensely talented Shehnaaz Gill, gears up for a worldwide release on June 13, 2025. The film boasts a stellar ensemble cast, including National Award winner Nirmal Rishi, Sukhi Chahel, Harby Sangha, Gurjazz, Uday Bir Sandhu and Juss. Directed by Amarjit Singh Saron, the genius behind Punjabi blockbusters like Honsla Rakh, Saunkan Saunkne and Kaala Sha Kaala, Ikk Kudi promises to deliver an impactful story. *Ikk Kudi* also marks Shehnaaz debut as a producer. It is also produced by Kaushal Joshi and Amarjit Singh Saron.





PRIYA ATLEE'S 'DREAM COMES TRUE' WITH BABY JOHN

The powerhouse duo Atlee and Priya Atlee are making their Bollywood debut with *Baby John*. Produced under their banner, 'A for Apple Productions', the highly anticipated action film stars Varun Dhawan in the lead role and is directed by Kalees. The film, featuring an ensemble cast, is set to have a grand release in cinemas on December 25, 2024.

Ahead of the grand release, the team hosted a grand event where Priya Atlee, shared her

heartfelt emotions about this project and said, "We are very happy to be here because it's like a dream come true for us. We are just babies this is our first production in Bollywood."

She also extended her thanks to Murad Khetani and lead actor Varun Dhawan, adding, "I would like to thank Murad, sir. We learned a lot from him and he handled this project with so much love. He is a family now to us. Thank you, Varun sir, for trusting us."

Priya further expressed her appreciation for her husband Atlee, stating, "I learned a lot from him." She also extended her heartfelt thanks to the entire cast and crew, particularly director Kalees, whom she described as "a family member." Speaking about his role in their journey, Priya remarked, "We are proud to launch our own family member Kalees. He is a friend to us and has been with us throughout our entire journey."

T've always been hesitant'

MANOJ BAJPAYEE ON INTIMATE SCENES

anoi Baipavee has been one of those rare actors who makes you sit up and pay attention every time he's on screen. With an impressive career that spans over two decades, he's become synonymous with powerful performances. His latest film Despatch on ZEE5 that's setting the screens on fire. The film, which delves into the gritty world of crime journalism, has earned rave reviews, with critics and fans alike praising Bajpayee's performance as Joy Bag, a seasoned crime journalist who ventures into troubled waters when he attempts to uncover a 2G spectrum scam. In a recent conversation, Manoj Bajpayee opens up about his approach to intimate scenes, his unique acting style and the personal struggles that make him one of the most admired actors in the industry. When asked how he makes his female co-actors comfortable during intimate scenes, Manoj Bajpayee shared, "This is where Kanu Behl's (director) expertise comes into play. It all starts with the workshops. As a person, I have always been held back. Being a village boy, I've always been hesitant. No matter how many years of experience or workshops I've gone through, that hesitation remains a part of me. It's not something I can just shed. It's the upbringing I've had and the place I come from. I've been struggling with it and I'm very open about it. I can't completely remove that from who I am." Despatch follows Joy Bag (Manoj Bajpayee), a veteran crime journalist grappling with the digital shift in the news industry. As he chases a career-defining scoop, he uncovers a

Raj Kundra on 'rebuilding' self from rubble: 'Not letting anyone tear it down'



or the past three years, businessman Raj Kundra has been at the center of media scrutiny and multimedia scrutiny and public controversy due to allegations of creating and distributing pornographic content through mobile apps. Recently, the businessman cleared the air regarding these allegations, categorically denying his involvement in producing pornographic content. In a candid conversation, Raj Kundra revealed how the matter came to his attention.

"I had an issue with someone—a business rival—and I didn't think they would have the courage to involve me in such things. But when I was in police custody, late at night, people would come and sav that it was someone from the inside who

was behind this. That's when I started understanding the message coming through loud and clear—this was a vendetta, a personal grudge. Someone was trying to pull me into a bigger game. Slowly, things started coming to light and received a lot of information," Raj Kundra shared.

Further he adds, "After that, I wrote to the authorities, naming those I believed were involved in this entire system. There's a lot to uncover here and as more truths are revealed, it will become evident that this isn't just about vendetta."

Raj Kundra was arrested in July 2021 on charges of violating obscenity laws, cheating, and conspiracy. The Mumbai

Police began investigating after receiving a complaint about pornographic videos being uploaded to certain mobile plat-forms. Kundra and his associates were accused of operating an app called HotShots, which reportedly hosted explicit content produced by his company.

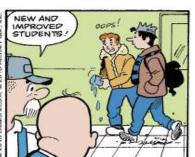
However, Raj Kundra recently shared his side of the story for the first time, reflecting on his journey of resilience and his faith in justice.

"I will be rebuilding myself from the rubble. I will not let anyone tear it down without a fight. I owe it to myself, to my family and to everyone who has believed in me to stand tall and see this through to the end," he concluded.

ARCHIE













CROSSWORD

dangerous Rs 8,000 crore scam that

professional reputation but also

threatens not only his



GARFIELD







OKAY, JANIE ---

NEXT MOVE ?



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



SUDOKU



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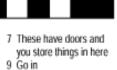
contain each number (1 to 9)

The sum of all numbers in

any row or column must equal 45.

their meanings DOWN

- 1 Closed 2 A skin mark from a wound 3 Take a break from work or play
 - 4 Twirl 5 Completely tired out



12 Remove moisture from

ACROSS 6 An illness that gives you

- red spots that itch (7-3) 11 Lubricated
- 8 Say
- 10 Tongans live here 13 Insects with large, often
- 14 Not together 17 Worship

colourful wings

- 16 A small tree branch 19 A book with words and
 - 17 A female relation

15 A curved support

under a bridge

18 A rower uses these



GINGER MEGGS

I WAS LONELY

HOLLYWOOD

I REALLY MISSED

MY FRIENDS BACK HOME IN THE EAST





the comic strip Fritzi Ritz by Emie Bushmiller in 1933. The strip's name changed to Nancy in 1938. We're ringin

NANCY- HAVE YOU

BEEN MAKING A LOT OF LONG-DISTANCE CALLS?





DIFFICULTY RATING: ** ** \$\frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{2} \fra

Vijayawada

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Friday December 20, 2024

Exploitation of artists is something I'm wary of, especially when travelling to new places'



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ravel is a celebration of freedom, a gateway to new perspectives and a constant reminder that the world is filled with endless stories waiting to be explored. For Sreerama Chandra, travel is not just a part of his career—it's a way of life. As a celebrated singer who has performed across the globe, he has spent countless hours in airports, on flights and in far-off destinations, weaving unforgettable memories along the way.

ries along the way.

Sreerama Chandra, celebrated singer and performer, has been a globetrotter for much of his career. In an exclusive interview with *The Pioneer*, the artist opened up about his extensive travel experiences, the joys of performing and the destinations that remain on his bucket list.

"For me, travelling is second nature," Sreerama shared. "Half of my life, I've spent on airplanes. From about 2010 to 2024, I've completed three passports, and my fourth is about to be filled up in just a couple of months." He credits his packed performance schedule for this impressive feat, as his career often takes him across continents.

Speaking about his recent trip to Dubai, the Subhanallah singer recalled it as a mix of work and leisure. "I had a show in Dubai, but I stayed back for a few days to explore. I indulged in some shopping, visited different restaurants and even had some peaceful moments by the beach enjoy-

moments by the beach enjoying Arabic cuisine," he said.
Reflecting on his previous trips, he shared highlights like skydiving over the iconic Palm Jumeirah and taking his father along for a thrilling desert safari. "Dubai is such a fascinating place—it's just a few hours away, yet it feels like an entirely different world with unique rules, geography, and culture," he noted.
While the O Rendu Prema singer cherishes his international trips, he

cherishes his international trips, he remains deeply connected to his roots. "India is unparalleled. No matter where I travel, there's a feeling of belonging here that no other place can offer. You don't need a visa or passport to explore its beauty, and every corner of the country feels like home," he said passionately.

Traveling for work comes with its challenges. Recalling a harrowing experience in the United States, he said, "A promoter had paid me only half the amount for a show and promised the rest before the performance. However, as the time approached, he refused to pay, leaving me in a tough spot. Being in a foreign country, it was daunting. I had to escalate the matter to officials before the payment was made." Such incidents have made him cautious about working with unfamiliar teams abroad. "Exploitation of artists is something I'm wary of, especially when traveling to new places," he admitted.

For the *Sarphira* artist, performing is more than just a job—it's about connecting with audiences who truly value his work. "I love singing for people who recognise and appreciate me. There's a certain magic in performing for an audience that has been waiting for you, especially in college or

corporate shows where the energy is unmatched," he said. He revealed that he prefers not to perform in settings where there's a lack of connection, such as generic wedding gigs. "I only take up weddings where the clients specifically want me and reach out to me. Respect and mutual appreciation are very important to me as an artist," he explained.

Despite his extensive travels, there are still places Sreerama dreams of exploring. "Paris and parts of Europe remain on my bucket list. I've also never been to South America, which is a region I'm eager to explore," he said. "Closer to home," he expressed an interest in exploring India's northern terrains. "I've been hearing a lot about places like Manali and Uttarakhand. I've never experienced snowfall and it's something I'd love to do."

When asked about his downtime, he confessed that he's a homebody at heart. "When I'm not travelling or working, I love staying at home—whether it's in Hyderabad or Mumbai. It's the perfect time to relax, watch web series, or catch up with friends over a good meal," he said.

For him, travel is both a necessity and a joy, offering

For him, travel is both a necessity and a joy, offering him the opportunity to experience different cultures and connect with fans across the globe. Whether it's performing in front of thousands or simply enjoying a quiet moment by the beach, every trip leaves a lasting memory. As he looks ahead, Sreerama remains ready to pack his bags and explore new horizons while staying grounded in his love for home.

behind him, completing multiple passports, and countless performances in diverse destinations, **Sreerama Chandra**, in an exclusive chat with **The Pioneer**, shares how travel fuels his creativity, offers moments of solace and connects him to cultures and experiences that leave a lasting imprint

With years of jet-setting





Winter's deadly grip: Cardiovascular cases surge in cold weather

s the temperature lowers, the danger of heart-related diseases is on the rise, making winter a tough season for cardiovascular health. Research studies have shown that the risk of heart attack increases up to 53% in winters compared to summers. Such seasonal increase necessitates increased awareness and proactive heart care during the cold seasons.

Cold weather causes constriction of blood vessels that leads to increased blood pressure, forcing the heart to work hard in circulating blood. With every 1°C drop in temperature, the risk of heart attack increases by 2%. Studies also reveal that there are 26-36% more deaths due to heart problems in winter than during summer. In addition, inhalation of cold air may trigger arterial spasms that decrease blood flow to the heart. At the same time, the body's attempt to produce heat accelerates heart rates that further exert the cardiovascular system. Dr. Amit Bhushan Sharma,

Dr. Amit Bhushan Sharma,
Director and Unit Head Cardiology - Interventional,
Paras Health, Gurugram,
explains, "The winter season
places unique stress on the cardiovascular system. Cold
weather not only increases
blood pressure but also makes

pre-existing heart conditions more dangerous. Simple steps such as dressing warmly, staying active indoors and monitoring blood pressure regularly can significantly reduce risks. For those with heart conditions, regular check-ups and vigilance are crucial during this time of year."

To prevent heart problems in winter, experts advise some common measures such as wearing layers to keep the body warm, avoiding sudden exertive activities and opting for light indoor exercises instead of strenuous ones, which can strain the heart too much.

A diet with fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and omega-3s also helps regulate cholesterol and promotes cardiovascular well-being. Blood pressure monitoring and vigilance about warning signs such as chest pain or shortness of breath should be considered among the key steps to preventing complications.

Timely health screenings can also allow people to detect potential problems early and receive appropriate care during the winter months.

As the season unfolds, prioritising heart health and adopting preventive measures can significantly reduce winterrelated cardiovascular risks and ensure overall well-being.



'Filming in real locations is always challenging, but worth every bit of effort'

n the vast landscape of Indian cinema, few filmmakers dare to venture into uncharted waters with the same fearless intensity as Kanu Behl. Known for his distinctive storytelling that straddles the line between realism and raw emotion, Behl's latest film, *Despatch*, offers a searing exploration of truth, power, and consequence. With the film now streaming on ZEE5, Behl opens up about the gripping partnership with the platform, the gritty challenges of shooting in Mumbai's chaotic real locations and his unique approach to cinema that transforms it from passive entertainment into a powerful conversation.

As *Despatch* makes its mark on ZEE5, Behl reflects on the partnership with a sense of pride and conviction that is palpable. For a director whose work consistently challenges conventional storytelling, aligning with a platform like ZEE5 was an obvious choice.

obvious choice.

"I couldn't have asked for a better collaboration than ZEE5," Behl asserts, his words underscoring the strategic synergy between his vision and the platform's ethos. "Over the last decade, ZEE5 has not only backed mass-appeal content but also supported films that carry a distinct voice, often defying mainstream conventions. They've created space for voices that don't just conform to the status quo. In today's environment, where artistic expressions can often be sidelined, ZEE5 is like a breath of fresh air."

This partnership is a perfect match for *Despatch*, a film that refuses to compro-

In a cinematic landscape often dominated by formulaic narratives, **Kanu Behl**'s *Despatch* is a daring detour into the raw, unvarnished truths of power and consequence. Speaking exclusively to *The Pioneer*, Behl reveals how his latest work, streaming now on ZEE5, captures Mumbai's soul and sparks a conversation that lingers far beyond the credits

mise on its artistic integrity. Behl sees the platform as a sorce that encourages diverse narratives, providing a home for stories that may otherwise struggle to find their audience. "It's a platform that understands that cinema isn't just about entertainment—it's about creating conversations. And that's what *Despatch* is: a conversation with the audience."

When it cames to capturing the essence of Mumbai, Behl's commitment to authenticity takes center stage. Instead of resorting to studio sets or staged locations, Behl and his crew opted for the pulsating heart of the city—Dadar station. The choice wasn't just about convenience; it was about embodying the raw energy of the city.



"Filming in real locations is always challenging, but it's worth every bit of effort," Behl admits, acknowledging the logistical hurdles. "We shot at Dadar station with Manoj Bajpayee rather than faking it elsewhere. That decision wasn't just about realism; it was about making the story breathe. The streets, the chaos, the people—it's all part of the fabric of *Despatch*."

Shooting in a place like Dadar station, with its constant hustle and bustle, came with its own set of challenges. But Behl credits his production crew, RSVP Films, and his dedicated team for pulling it off seamlessly, even during the tough times of the pandemic. "Filming in such locations wasn't easy, but the crew made it possible. The authenticity we captured on screen is all thanks to their dedication and hard work."

What makes Behl's filmmaking stand out is his refusal to impose a singular message on the audience. For him, cinema is not a vehicle for preaching; it's an invitation to engage, question and reflect.

tion to engage, question and reflect.

"I don't believe in telling people what to think through my films," he says, his voice measured but passionate. "Cinema is not about standing on a pedestal and delivering a sermon. It's about having a conversation with the audience. Through the characters, the narrative, and the situations, I aim to present certain ideas—whether it's about power, corruption, or the human condition—but I leave enough space for the audience to form their own

It's this depth of engagement that sets *Despatch* apart from the typical Bollywood

fare. Instead of handing over clear answers, Behl challenges viewers to think critically about the world in which the story unfolds. "The goal is to create a space where, after the film ends, the audience is still thinking, still reflecting. That's where the real conversation begins—when they engage with the film even after the credits roll."

For Behl, the magic of cinema lies not in delivering a pre-packaged message but in sparking dialogue. "If the audience is still with the film, even when they're no longer consuming the story, then you know you've achieved something powerful. That's when they start to really connect with the film."

With Despatch, Behl is carving out a space for cinema that doesn't shy away from complexity, nuance, and a bit of discomfort. As he continues to push boundaries, he's a part of a new wave of filmmakers who are reshaping the Indian film industry—one where stories are told on their own terms, without compromise.

"Cinema today needs to be more than just an escape. It needs to reflect the world we live in, with all its messiness, contradictions and complexities. *Despatch* is my attempt to start a conversation, not just tell a story. I want the audience to think, to question, and to engage with the themes long after they've watched the film."

As *Despatch* continues to captivate audiences on ZEE5, Behl's vision is clear: cinema is not about passive consumption; it's about active participation. And in this bold, thought-provoking film, he's inviting the world to join the conversation.

India to play its Champions Trophy matches at neutral venue

¬he deadlock over the hosting of next year's Champions Trophy finally ended on Thursday when the ICC announced that India will play their matches of the 50-over event at a neutral venue instead of host country Pakistan, which will get a similar arrangement for tournaments to be held in India till 2027.

The agreement will also extend to the 2028 women's T20 World Cup, which will be held in Pakistan. Although no formal announcement has been made, but India's Champions Trophy matches are likely to be held in the

"The ICC Board has approved that all matches between India and Pakistan played at ICC Events during the current rights cycle from 2024 to 2027 (which are to be hosted in India or Pakistan)

venue proposed by the tournament host," said the ICC in a statement, confirming what PTI reported on December 5.

The arrangement will also cover next year's women's World Cup in India and the T20 World Cup in 2026, to be jointly hosted by India and Sri

"India's Champions Trophy games will most likely be played in the UAE. As far as the Women's ODI World Cup in India is concerned, the India-Pakistan game could be held in Sri Lanka," said a India had refused to travel to

Pakistan for the event scheduled in February-March due to security concerns. The Indians have not played in Pakistan since the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks in which 150 people were killed. The two countries' last bilateral engagement was



Travelling to Pakistan also requires Indian government's clearance which has remained firm on the status quo.

"The schedule for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 is set to be confirmed soon," the ICC added. The decision, that came after

a series of back-channel talks, was on expected lines after the sport's governing body maintained prolonged silence

maintained prolonged silence on the contentious matter during the previous set-up led by chairman Greg Barclay. His successor Jay Shah took charge on December 1 and all stakeholders, including the Pakistan Cricket Board, the BCCI and the broadcasters, were running out of time to organise the 50-over event that was last played in the UK

Thursday's announcement meant it was the first major decision taken in Shah's always clear, the matter got stretched because of PCB's refusal to allow a "one-sided" arrangement of neutral venues. Led by Pakistan interior minister Mohsin Naqvi, the PCB was determined not to lose face in front of the local public. PCB, which had sent its team

to India for the ODI World Cup last year, had categorically opposed the hybrid model but eventually agreed to it on reciprocal grounds.
The PCB had earlier indicated

that it wanted a greater share in the annual revenue cycle to accommodate the Índian demand for a hybrid model but there is no word yet on whether that has been discussed or accepted.

The tournament will feature eight teams, divided into two groups. The top two teams from each group will advance to the semifinals.



Ashwin deserved a fitting farewell: Kapil Dev

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Unable to comprehend R Kapil hoped that the Board of Ashwin's sudden decision to retire from international cricket, a shocked World Cupwinning skipper Kapil Dev says the premier off-spinner deserved a fitting farewell, ideally on home soil.

Ashwin stunned one and all by calling it quits on Kapil, 65, said Ashwin was a Wednesday, right after the Brisbane Test against unorthodox bowler, who Australia ended in a draw. Kapil felt Ashwin seemed unhappy with something.

"I was shocked by how one of India's greatest cricketers chose to leave the game. The disappointment among the fans was widespread, but I also saw a tinge of hurt on his face. He looked unhappy, and that was sad. He deserved much better, a fitting farewell," Kapil

said in a statement to PTI. As has been his wont, Ashwin chose to walk his own way while retiring in the middle of an important series. Kapil said he would like to hear the Tamil Nadu man's side of

story.
"He could have waited and announced his retirement on Indian soil, but I don't know why Ashwin called it a day. I would want to hear his side of the story. Give him that respect. He has played 106 Tests for the country. I don't think anyone can match his

The seven candidates running for International

manifestos published on Thursday, and one is offering

to take just half of the eight-

vear mandate on offer and

stand again in 2029.

had

Committee

their

AP ■ GENEVA

Olympic

président

humongous contribution to Indian cricket."

Control of Cricket in India (BCCI) would arrange a "grand farewell" to Ashwin.
"I'm sure the parent body of

cricket in India, BCCI, shall plan a grand farewell for this giant match-winner of Team India," he said.

constantly hustled the batters with his change of pace and cleverly disguised line and length.
"He was ready to experiment,

and that is what set him apart. In a game where the batters get the most accolades, Ashwin stood out with his prowess.

"Ashwin was brave. He could bowl at any stage of the contest. Do you find bowlers with such tremendous tactical sense who can adapt quickly? He was his captain's go-to man," he said. Praising both his cricketing brain and offfield character, Kapil said Ashwin was a match-winner with no parallel in modern cricket.

"He has won India's highest number of Man of the Series awards. That is a tremendous compliment that puts his game consistency and perspective. He was not a "ves" man and came across as a

that has worked with the IOC

Two members of the Bach-

chaired IOC executive board,

Juan Antonio Samaranch Ir.

And Prince Feisal al Hussein,

joined Coe in promising to

empower members to have a

bigger role in the Olympic

administration.

ISL: FC Goa aim to end Mohun Bagan's unbeaten streak

FC Goa will seek to snap a rampaging Mohun Bagan Super Giant's eight-match unbeaten streak in the Indian Super League (ISL) when the two sides square off in a 12th round match here on Friday. FC Goa, under India head coach Manolo Marquez, will also aim to improve their record against the Mariners, having lost five of their eight meetings in the ISL, including a narrow 0-1 defeat in their most recent fixture in February.

Super Giant's unbeaten run has seen them win seven and draw one of their last eight ISL games, and that has put them on top of the league leaderboard with 26 points from 11 matches, winning eight, drawing twice and losing once.

On the other hand, the Gaurs



are placed fourth with 19 points from the same number of games. Both these teams have been

in equally efficient form upfront, with the Kolkatabased side netting 22 times in the competition thus far, as compared to the 21 of the Goan club. However, the visitors have

been comparatively better organised at the back, as they have conceded 10 goals as opposed to the 15 of FC Goa. Head-to-head, FC Goa have won twice, whereas Super Giant have emerged victorious five times in the eight times these two teams have faced each other in the

FC Goa head coach Marquez admitted that the Mariners have a nice mix of international and domestic stars that make them a strong opponent.

'I feel that we are playing one of the strongest teams in the competition. Mohun Bagan have most of the top national team players, and they've spent a lot on getting good foreigners too," Marquez

"We need to keep fighting to win"

Super Giant head coach Jose Molina lauded his team for not giving up under any circumstance.

"The mentality of Mohun Bagan Super Giant is to fight every game till the end. We have to attack and defend well, communicate properly, but most importantly we need to keep fighting to get the win," Molina said.

"I've had a history of sides and calves, they're probably

the two things that have kept me out for the majority over

the last four years.
"But yeah I sort of just keep

adding another layer to the defence hopefully, get back into the gym, I've ticked a lot of boxes over the last 12

Hazlewood said he does not

want to rush back to action

before regaining full fitness,

which he is hoping to achieve by the two-match Test tour of Sri Lanka in late

months."



Australian top-three seriously out of form, should go back to basics: Ian Healy

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

A head of the crucial Boxing Day Test against India from December 26, legendary wicketkeeper Ian we get this form back? Are Healy has pointed out the you confident that form will serious lack of form of the top-three Australian batters and advised them to go to be made, and 'what the basics and perform if they want to confinue in the team.

Australia made 445 in the first innings of the rain truncated third Test at Brisbane with Travis Head and Steve Smith smashing centuries but the home team did miserably in the second innings before declaring at 89 for 7.

The match ended in a draw with the five-match Test series level at 1-1.

"I don't see them (Australia) regressing going into Melbourne, but they are out of form, they're seriously out of form," Healy told SEN Radio.

Openers Usman Khawaja, Nathan McSweeney and onedrop batter Marnus Labuschagne performed below expectations at the Gabba before Smith and Head halted the slide with centuries in the first innings.

The second innings was even worse with the top three managing just 13 runs. "Questions have got to be

asked of George Bailey: 'Can reemerge in our top three?' "Otherwise changes have to suggestions might vou have for us, George?' That type of

thing."
Healy opined that the Melbourne Test should be Khawaja, McSweeney and Labuschagne's best chance to redeem themselves and asked the trio to get back to the basics. "The Melbourne Test is

probably the least volatile wicket they'll play on and that's their best chance. But form takes a little longer than a week to turn around, and it's just not coming for

"They've got to get right back to basics and strip it right back. See the ball and hit it, don't care where your feet go. That's the first step, just get some clarity in your head," said Healy. Australia must avoid defeat

in Melbourne to keep their hopes alive of taking back the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

Hazlewood 'frustrated' at missing remainder of India series due to 'random' injury

PTI BRISBANE

ustralia fast bowler Josh AHazlewood "frustrated" by the timing of his injury after he was ruled out of the remaining two Tests against India due to a right calf strain sustained

during the drawn third match at the Gabba. Hazlewood, who had also missed the second Test (pink-ball) in Adelaide which Australia won by 10 wickets - due to a side strain, described the latest injury as "random".

"Just frustrating really. Ticked every box heading into the (third) Test, I could understand if it was my side again, but it was just a random calf strain," he told

"It's just the timing again, they are only little 2-3 week injuries, it's just the timing of



it and missing big games is the frustrating thing." The 33-year-old Hazlewood was sent for scans after just one over of bowling on the fourth day after hurting his right calf in the warm-up before play. The injury only

turned out to be a strain, but it's expected to be serious enough to end his home Test summer early.

"Obviously, do a deep dive into it and see what we can come up with ... Feels pretty random," he said.

"That's probably the goal, just take it as it comes over the next few weeks," he said. "No rush to get anything in a hurry, it's just getting everything right. Probably take a few extra days here and there. Ticking things off

and getting everything right."

January and February.

IOC publishes manifestos of 7 candidates running to be president and lead Olympics

seen as Bach's preferred choice to continue his

Coventry and Coe are two-

time Olympic champions in

swimming and track, respectively. Coe also led

organising the 2012 London

policies.

Olympics. Coe upset the IOC establishment — including some voters — this year by committing World Athletics to pay \$50,000 prize money to gold medalists in track and field at the Paris Olympics. The sport also will pay silver and bronze medalists at the 2028 Los Angeles Summer

Games. Though not specifying prize money, Prince Feisal called for Olympic athletes to be "properly valued" while Samaranch proposed letting athletes use footage of their performances on social media channels. That would relax strict IOC rules on Olympic athletes' ability to promote themselves.

include picking a host for the 2036 Olympics, with India and Qatar in the mix, and looking at moving the Summer Games from its established July-August place in the modern sports calendar.

The next IOC president also must address the impact of climate change on the global sports calendar, gender issues in sports, when and how to bring Russia back fully into the Olympic Games and signing a new U.S. Broadcast deal. Long-time partner NBC's deal expires after the 2032 Brisbane Olympics and has been a foundation of Olympic revenue, which was \$7.6 billion in the 2021-24 Olympic cycle.

The IOC presidency has been limited to 12 years in anti-corruption reforms passed after the Salt Lake City bidding scandal erupted in 1999. The first term is eight years and presidents can seek a second and final term of

gymnastics.

The manifesto releases are one of just two set-piece events in a mostly opaque

engagement with voters. Candidates will present themselves to voters, though not take questions, at a Jan. 30 meeting at IOC headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland.

The IOC has had no female president and just nine men leading it in a 130-year history. Eight of those presidents were from Europe

Coventry, the 41-year-old sports minster of Zimbabawe, is just the second female candidate ever to run for the

IOC leadership and is widely

and one from the United

Challenges facing the IOC four years.

who reaches his limit of 12

years in office next year,

members now simply rubber-stamp a single host candidate Morinari Watanabe from limit self-promotion and

body. They also promise to raise the retirement age for members from 70 to 75 years. Members must be invited to join the exclusive IOC club and the current 111 include European and Middle East

Sebastian Coe, the World Athletics president who turned 68 this year, pledged to embed "transformative change over the next four royalty, leaders of international sports bodies, years" then seek re-election rovalty, ahead of schedule. Coe was among several candidates offering to give former and current Olympic athletes, politicians, diplomats, industrialists and back to IOC members — who

an Oscar-winning actress. elect their president at a March 18-21 meeting near Only IOC members can be presidential candidates and the site of Ancient Olympia in Greece — a decisive choice in the other contenders are picking future host cities. Under the hands-on presidency of Thomas Bach, board member Kirsty Coventry and three more presidents of sports governing bodies: Johan Eliasch from skiing, David presidents of

Vijayawada | Friday December 20, 2024

'I left a web series project where I played lead, just so I could be a part of Pushpa 2'

Stepping into the spotlight with her debut in *Pushpa 2*, **Aanchal Munjal** brings a fresh spark to South Indian cinema. In an exclusive chat with The Pioneer, she opens up about her remarkable journey. her memorable experiences working alongside **Allu Arjun and her** deep gratitude for the love and recognition she's

received from fans and the industry

alike

tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

n the cinematic spectacle of Pushpa 2, a fresh spark of talent lights up the screen with Aanchal Munjal's small yet unforgettable debut. Known for her performances in TV classics like Parvarrish - Kuchh Khattee Kuchh Meethi and films such as We Are Family, Aanchal's transition to the world of blockbuster cinema is marked by depth and poise, proving that even the smallest roles can create a lasting impact. With a

spark in her voice and nothing but a sense of gratitude, in an exclusive conversation, she opens up about her journey in the entertainment industry, her experience working on *Pushpa 2* and her aspirations for the future.

Reflecting on her career, shesaid, "I only have gratitude—for God and, of course, my fans, who have always showered me with immense love. To be honest, I've never taken fame seriously because I believe it can get to your head. But today, when people recognize me and acknowledge my work in projects like *Pushpa 2*, it reminds me of how blessed I am.

I'm incredibly thankful for this journev.

Landing a role in Pushpa 2 alongside stars Allu Arjun and Rashmika Mandanna was a surreal experience for Aanchal. "I was over the moon when I got the call," she recalled. "At first, I thought it was a scam because the main song had already been released. But after verifying, I realised it was real. I even left a Hindi web series project where I was playing the lead because I didn't want to miss being part of Pushpa 2. It was a dream come true."

Speaking about her character in the film, Aanchal revealed, "My entry was grand and tied to the pivotal plot twist where Pushpa wants to expand internationally. My character, along with another partner (played by Saurabh Sachdeva), helps facilitate that transition. Although I won't reveal too much, it was thrilling to be part of such an impactful sequence."

When discussing her experience on set, Aanchal was full of praise for Allu Arjun, describing him as humble and supportive. "Initially, I was hesitant to approach him because when he's in costume, he completely embodies Pushpa. But by the third day, he started interacting with me. I remember that, during one scene, he gave me a suggestion to adjust my position for better delivery. It

was such a thoughtful gesture, and

it showed how invested he is in

every detail," she shared. Aanchal also mentioned a lighthearted moment when Allu Ariun mistook her for a non-Indian. "He thought I was from Dubai or somewhere else. On the last day, when I went to get a picture with him, he complimented me, saving I didn't look Indian. It was a fun and memorable interaction."

LANDING A ROLE IN *PUSHPA 2* ALONGSIDE STARS ALLU ARJUN AND RASHMIKA MANDANNA WAS A SURREAL EXPERIENCE. I WAS OVER THE MOON WHEN I GOT THE CALL. AT FIRST, I THOUGHT IT WAS A SCAM BECAUSE THE MAIN SONG HAD ALREADY BEEN

Although she didn't have scenes with Rashmika Mandanna, Aanchal expressed her admiration for the South Indian film industry's precision and dedication. "Ín South Indian cinema, even a single scene is shot with immense attention to detail. For instance, we spent an entire day filming the landing of a chopper. Their com-

mitment to perfection is unparal-

leled," she noted.

The response to her role in *Pushpa 2* has been overwhelming. She revealed, "I kept my appearance under wraps because I wanted it to be a surprise. After the first show, my inbox was flooded with messages. Fans who've followed my career since my early days said they felt a personal sense of pride seeing me in the film. That kind of love and support is incredibly humbling."

Addressing the unfortunate incident in Hyderabad, where a stampede during a screening claimed a life, she said, "It's a heartbreaking incident. My heart goes out to the family of the woman who lost her life. While Allu Arjun's gesture of donating to the family is commendable, no amount can truly compensate for such a loss.'

Looking ahead, Aanchal is optimistic about her future in cinema. "I'm working on a project right now, but I can't reveal details yet. Moving forward, I want to take up roles that resonate with audiences on a deeper level. I aspire to do impactful films and hope for everyone's blessings as I continue

this journey," she concluded. With her talent, determination, and grounded nature, Aanchal Munial is undoubtedly carving a niche for herself in the



Dhop from Game Changer takes the internet by storm



ega Powerstar Ram Charan has teamed up with renowned filmmaker Shankar for the highly anticipated project Game Changer. As part of the promotional campaign, the star actor is gearing up to attend the grand pre-release event in Dallas, USA, on December 21, 2024. The event has already generated significant buzz among fans and the film fraternity alike.

So far, three songs from the movie's soundtrack have been unveiled,

each turning into a chartbuster. Adding to the excitement, the team has now released the promo of the fourth single, Dhop, coinciding with producer Dil Raju's birthday. This latest track promises to be a standout addition to the album, showcasing a refreshing vibe and spectacular visuals.

Composed by That works in recent times. The song's promo hints at a unique and vibrant composition, setting it apart from the previous releases. The Telugu version of *Dhop* has been sung by Thaman S, Roshini JKV and Prudhvi Sruthi Ranjani, with lyrics penned by Saraswathi Puthra Rama Jogayya Sastry. For the Tamil version, the lyrics were written by Vivek, with vocals by Thaman S, Aditi Shankar and Prudhvi Sruthi Ranjani. In Hindi, Raqueeb Alam crafted the lyrics, while Thaman S, Raja Kumari and Prudhvi Sruthi Ranjani lent their voices.

The full song is scheduled to be launched during the pre-release event in Dallas at 9 PM CST on December 21 (8:30 AM IST on December 22). With the promo already creating waves across social

media platforms, fans are eagerly awaiting the complete track, which is expected to further elevate the album's appeal.

Game Changer features Ram Charan in a dual role, supported by an ensemble cast including Kiara Advani, Anjali, SJ Suryah, Srikanth and Samuthirakani. The movie is being produced by Dil Raju and Sirish under the banners of Sri Venkateswara Creations, Dil Raju Productions, and Zee Studios. Set for a grand worldwide release on January 10, 2025, the film will be available in Telugu, Tamil and Hindi, promising a cinematic experience like no other.

Balagam fame Venky & Meenakshi Mogilaiah is no more

popular folk singer Mogilaiah passed away on Thursday morning at the age of 67. Fondly known as *Balagam* Mogilaiah, after his memorable song in the film *Balagam*,

he had been unwell for the past few days and breathed his last on Thursday morning. Mogilaiah gained fame for singing the emo-tional climax song in Balagam, directed by Venu. The film,



set against a Telangana village backdrop, was a massive success and won several awards. Mogilaiah's soulful rendition in the climax, which delved into family relationships, was one of the highlights of the movie.

Following the success of *Balagam*, Mogilaiah received widespread recognition. However, in recent months, he had been battling severe health issues, including kidney and heart problems. Megastar Chiranjeevi and Balagam director Venu had extended financial help to him during his treatment. Telangana Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar also provided financial assistance of Rs 1 lakh for his medical expenses. Despite these efforts, Mogilaiah's condition worsened and his family admitted him to a hospital in Warangal, where he sadly passed away

on Thursday morning.

Mogilaiah hailed from the village of Duggondi, which is now in mourning following the news of his demise.

Balagam director Venu and producer Dil Raju have expressed their heartfelt condolences to his family. Mogilaiah's contributions to folk music and his unforgettable performance in *Balagam* will always be

Chaudhary celebrate love & nostalgia in Meenu

Venkatesh and director Anil Ravipudi have teamed up once again for the film *Sankranthiki Vasthunnam*. Similar to their previous collaborations, this movie is touted to be an entertainer, according to the makers. The film's first song has already topped the charts and now the makers have released the second single, Meenu. In the film, Venkatesh plays the role of an ex-cop, with Aishwarya Rajesh portraying his wife and Meenakshi Chaudhary as his ex-girlfriend. The soundtrack is composed by Bheems Ceciroleo, who has delivered yet another enchanting number with *Meenu*. The promo for the song was unveiled on Venkatesh's birthday, creating anticipation for the full version, which is now out. The song, featuring Venkatesh and Meenakshi Chaudhary, is a flashback sequence set during Venkatesh's time as a trainer at a police academy, where he falls in love with his trainee, Meenakshi. The heartfelt lyrics, penned by Anantha Sriram, are beautifully complemented by the captivating vocals of Bheems and Pranavi Acharya. Sankranthiki Vasthunnam is scheduled to hit screens on January 14, 2025, coinciding with Sankranthi, promising a festive treat for audiences





Niddhi Agerwal's leaked from ad, not The Raja Saab sets

There are many reports about the release date of Prabhasstarrer The Raja Saab, with speculation that the film might be postponed. Originally scheduled to release on April 10, 2025, rumours have surfaced that the film's release may be shifted to another date. This speculation arose when Siddhu Jonnalagadda's upcoming film announced its release on the same date, leading many to believe that The Raja Saab might be rescheduled to avoid a clash. While the makers have not confirmed the postponement, they did address rumours about the teaser launch "The Raia Saah shooting is progressing rapidly with continuous day-and-night schedules. Nearly 80% of the shoot has been completed and post-production work is in full swing. We've noticed various speculations circulating about the teaser release during Christmas or New Year. We kindly request you not to believe these false rumours. We will officially announce any updates at the right time," the production house clarified. However, they made no mention of Meanwhile, a photo of Niddhi Agerwal, one of the female leads opposite Prabhas in the film, has been leaked and is doing rounds on the internet. Directed by Maruthi, The Raja Saab is said to be a horror-comedy. The leaked photo, in which Niddhi Agerwal appears glamorous, has caught the attention of fans. However, the actress later clarified on her social media that the picture is not from The Raja Saab but from an ad shoot. The makers are under pressure from Prabhas' fans, who are eagerly waiting for updates on the film. It seems the teaser for The Raja Saab will not be released during Christmas or New Year, despite the rising anticipation. For now, fans must remain patient as

the team prepares to provide

official announcements

POOJA HEGDE

Actress Pooja Hegde has kicked off another shooting schedule for the muchawaited film Thalapathy 69 in Chennai. Sharing her excitement with her fans, Pooja posted a serene image from the set on social media, capturing the tranquil morning vibes. She captioned the picture, "Chennai Mornings Day 16," hinting at her early start to the day at 6:30 a.m., adding a personal touch to her behind-the-scenes update. Thalapathy 69 marks Pooja Hegde's first onscreen collaboration with Tamil superstar Vijay. The film is expected to be a major milestone in Vijay's illustrious career. Directed by H. Vinoth and produced by Venkat K. Narayana under the banner of KVN Productions, *Thalapathy 69* is poised to be a grand tribute to Vijay's legacy. The project has generated significant buzz not only due to its star-studded cast but also because it is expected to be Vijay's final film before he embarks on his political journey. In addition to Vijay and Pooja Hegde, the film also stars Bobby Deol in a crucial role, along with renowned actors like Gautham Vasudev Menon, Prakash Raj, Narain, Priyamani, Mamitha Baiju, Monisha Blessy and Varalaxmi Sarathkumar. The diverse cast is one of the key highlights of the film, which promises to offer a compelling story for audiences.

According to sources close to the project, Vijay will be portraying a suspended police officer who regains his power for a special mission. This intense role is expected to showcase the actor in a new light, with fans eagerly awaiting his performance.

The film, which commenced with a traditional puia ceremony on October 4, is slated for a worldwide release in October 2025. It will be available in multiple languages including Tamil, Telugu and Hindi, ensuring a wide reach across various audiences. The makers have kept fans engaged with frequent updates, including a set of behind-the-scenes pictures with the caption, "Pictures layum seri adha paathutu iruka unga face layum seri Happy Smiles irukunu we know #Thalapathy69Poojai stills SET 1 idhoo. Updates inum mudivala.. SET 2 incoming (I know there are happy smiles by adding pictures and looking at your boss. Updates are still not complete... Set 2 Incoming)," hinting at more exciting updates soon. Alongside *Thalapathy 69*, Pooja Hegde has a packed schedule with several other exciting projects in the pipeline. She will be seen in the action-drama Deva, costarring Shahid Kapoor, which is set for release on January 31, 2025. Additionally,

she has signed on for the highly anticipated film Suriya 44, where she stars opposite superstar Suriya, and the romantic comedy Hai Jawani Toh Isha Hona Hai.

STANDALONE



Keerthy Suresh, who recently tied the knot with her longtime boyfriend Anony Thattil in an intimate wedding ceremony in Goa, made her first public appearance post-wedding at a Christmas bash. The actress joined her Baby John co-stars Varun Dhawan, Atlee, and Wamiqa Gabbi for the celebrations, effortlessly stealing the spotlight as she flaunted her elegant mangalsutra, paired with a stunning outfit that radiated her post-wedding glow